

MOSES, JOSHUA and SAMSON

Duncan Heaster

Carelinks Publishing

PO Box 152, Menai NSW 2234 Australia

www.carelinks.net

- 4. Moses and Joshua
 - 4-1 Moses And Us
 - 4-1-1 Moses Our Example
 - 4-1-2 Moses And " The reproach of Christ"
 - 4-1-3 Moses And Paul
 - 4-2 Moses: The Path Of Growth
 - 4-2-1 Events In The Life Of Moses
 - 4-2-2 The Spiritual Growth Of Moses
 - 4-3 The Death Of Moses
 - 4-3-1 Themes Of Moses In Deuteronomy
 - 4-3-2 The Song Of Moses
 - 4-3-3 The Death Of Moses
 - 4-4 Moses As A Type Of Christ
 - 4-5 Moses Not Entering The Land
 - 4-6 Moses In The Gospel Of John
 - 4-7 Moses And Amalek
 - 4-8-1 God Manifestation In Moses
 - 4-8-2 The Hand Of God
 - 4-9 Joshua: The Jagged Graph
 - 4-9-1 Events In The Life Of Joshua
 - 4-9-2 Legalistic Obedience?
 - 4-9-3 Peer Pressure
 - 4-9-4 Joshua Our Example
 - 4-10 Joshua: Potential Messiah?
 - 4-11 Joshua And The Name of God
 - 4-12 Rahab And The Fall Of Jericho
- 5. Samson
 - 5-1 A Character Study Of Samson
 - 5-2 Samson And Deja Vu
 - 5-2-1 Repetition In Biblical Narratives
 - 5-2-2 Samson And Job
 - 5-2-3 Samson And Gideon
 - 5-2-4 Samson And Solomon
 - 5-2-5 Samson And David
 - 5-3 Samson's Marriage (Judges 14:1 - 15:8)
 - 5-4 Samson At Lehi (Judges 15:9 - 20)

- 5-5 Samson In Gaza (Judges 16: 1-3)
- 5-6 Samson And Delilah (Judges 16:4-21)
- 5-7 The Death Of Samson (Judges 16:23 - 30)
- 5-8 Samson A Type Of Christ

Chapter 4: MOSES

4-1-1 Moses Our Example

It cannot be too often or too highly stressed that Moses was and is seen in the Jewish world as a larger than life figure. Theologically, Judaism has placed Moses greater even than Messiah. We have shown that it was the purpose of John's Gospel to correct this ⁽¹⁾. The idea that ordinary believers can in any sense be equal to or even greater than Moses was (and is) absolute anathema to the Jewish mind. And yet through allusion and almost explicit statement, the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers invite us to see ourselves as equal to or greater than Moses, on account of the spiritual riches made available to us in Christ. How radical this was to the first century mind is extremely hard for us to enter into. The point is, God intellectually stretches us to an extent which may be almost unacceptable to us; as with our first century brethren, we too are challenged to radically turn against many of the concepts and attitudes which are fundamental to our upbringing. If we can really grasp the reality of the fact that we are called to behold the *glory of God*. Moses seems to have struggled to believe that he really had been invited to such an experience (Ex. 33:16; 34:9,34).

Moses: Our Example

In this light, consider the following invitations to be like Moses:

- The very name 'Moses' meaning 'drawn out' suggests he is the prototype for every saint- a called out one.
- We'll sing Moses' song; as if his victory was ours (Rev. 15:3)
- We'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5), as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32).
- At the day of judgment, we will all go through the Moses experience; hiding in the rock in the presence of God's glory (Is. 2:10 cp. Ex. 33:22). And our vision of that glory in the face of the Lord Jesus *even now* should have the same humbling effect.
- “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto *you* by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham...” (Mt. 22:31) quotes the words God spoke to *Moses* as having been spoken personally to *us*.
- When we read that God will not place too great a burden upon us, but will provide a way of escape so that we are able to bear the burden (1 Cor. 10:13), the allusion is clearly to Num. 11:17 LXX, where Moses is provided with helpers so that he will be able to bear the burden of the people.

- In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if *we* are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

- We must not cast away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward- and the writer uses these words about Moses, bidding us follow his example (Heb. 10:35; 11:26).

- John's Gospel contains several references to the fact that Christ 'shows' the Father to those who believe in him, and that it is possible to " see the Father" and his glory through seeing or accurately believing in him as the Son of the Father (Jn. 11:40; 12:45; 14:9; 16:25). Moses earnestly wished to see the Father fully, but was unable to do so. The height which Moses reached as he cowered in that rock cleft and heard God's Name declared is hard to plumb. But we have been enabled to *see* the Father, through our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. But does an appropriate sense of *wonder* fill us? Do we really make time to *know* the Son of God? Or do we see words like " glory" as just cold theology?

- The Lord Jesus in John's Gospel describes Himself in terms of the "I am..." formula. Each time, He was referring back to the burning bush revelation of Yahweh as the "I am"; and by implication, the Lord's audience are thereby placed in the position of Moses, intended to rise up in response as he did.

- Our eyes shall "behold the land that is very far off" (Is. 33:17) just as Moses had been given the vision of the promised land far off.

- The man Moses was *made* very meek, until he was the meekest man alive on earth (Num. 12:3 Heb.). "A stuttering shepherd, shy of leadership and haunted by his crime of passion" in slaying the Egyptian...these things developed this in him. Remember that Moses himself wrote this. It's an autobiographical comment, reflecting of course the Spirit of Him who knows every heart, and could make such a statement. And yet he writes it in recording how God had rebuked Aaron and Miriam for criticizing him, and how He had told them that He spoke with Moses alone face to face. We can imagine Moses blushing, with hung head. And then he makes the comment, that he was made the most humble man... Appreciating the honour of seeing so much of God, when he himself was a sinner, was part of that humbling process. All Israel will ultimately go through this when they face up to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: " Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Is. 2:10,11). This certainly reads like an allusion to Moses' cowering in the rock, humbling himself in the dust, before the glory of Yahweh. Our glimpses of the wonder of the Father's character should have the same effect upon us, just beholding the glory of God, i.e. the manifestation of His perfect character is Christ, should change us into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18- another invitation to see ourselves as Moses). And yet I see little evidence of this in my

own life, or those of my brethren and sisters. We have perhaps become all too familiar with the knowledge of the glory of God. The awesomeness of His holiness as manifest in Christ seems far, far from our appreciation. Despite God's evident pleasure with Moses, manifest in the revelation He gave him, Moses still fumbled around in his recognition of his own humanity: "If now I have found grace in thy sight...pardon *our* iniquity and *our* sin" (Ex. 34:9). This is surely homework for us; to grow in our appreciation and marvel at God's holiness, at the moral beauty of His character. For this is how we too will be changed into the same image, and how we will come to truly love God. For we cannot love what we do not appreciate or understand. But note that God's comment on Moses was also: "the man Moses was very great" (Ex. 11:3). Yet it is also written that "the man Moses was very meek" (Num. 12:3). Putting the two passages together we have the clear lesson that he who humbles himself is made great; and in this, Moses was not only a type of Christ but also a pattern for all who would go through the pattern which the Lord Jesus set before us: of humbling ourselves now that we might be made great in due time. Moses our example is really a challenge in this.

- Moses desired that God's glory would "appear... upon / unto" the children of God's servants (Ps. 90:16). He wanted all God's children to have the same experience of glory appearing to them as he had had. And according to 2 Cor. 3:18, this desire is fulfilled every time a man turns to the Lord Jesus, and like Moses, with unveiled face, beholds that same glory.

- The prayerfulness of Moses and his changing of God's mind about His people clearly inspired many in later Biblical history, who saw in Moses a real pattern for themselves. Asaph speaks of how in his nightly prayers "My hand was stretched out... and slackened not" (Ps. 77:2 RV). This is clearly the language of Moses praying with upheld hands for victory over Amalek.

- God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold" (Num. 12:8) is the basis of 1 Cor. 13:12: "Now (in the period of the Spirit gifts) we see through a glass darkly; but then (in the dispensation of the completed word) face to face: now I know in part (from the ministry of the gifts); but then shall I know, even as also I am known". The point of this connection is simply this: The close relationship between God and Moses is now available to us through the word. But do we feel God speaking to us face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11)? For this is how close God and Moses came through the word. Yet it is possible. An *urgent* devotion to the word is needed by us as a community. This is what we really need exhortation about.

- In the same way as Moses was called up into the mount to receive his Divine commission, so the Lord Jesus called up to the mount His disciples- implying that they, who represent all of us, were now a new Moses (Mk. 3:13). Moses was thus an example that challenged those from a Jewish background especially.

- Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, "I will come unto thee ['you' singular] and bless thee" (Ex. 20:23). This is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 RV)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses' relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God's people who truly sacrifices to Him.

- When Eliphaz says that the righteous “Will die at the height of your powers, and be gathered like ripened grain” (Job 5:26, Stephen Mitchell’s translation), there is an evident connection with the account of Moses being *gathered* at his death, and dying with his natural faculties undiminished. Moses is presented as the epitome of the righteous believer.

- The way Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy Israel for the sake of what the surrounding nations would say is indeed inspirational to us all. It surely inspired David to pray likewise- for “wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now there God?” (Ps. 115:2).

- “I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say” (Ex. 4:12) is almost quoted in Mt. 10:19,20 and Mk. 13:11 concerning how we too will be taught what to say when we come before the rulers of our world. In such moments of crisis, Moses, even in weakness as he was at this time, really is our living example.

- Joshua was encouraged that “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45). Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe.

In addition to all this, Moses is set up as example and representative of his people Israel. Israel is likened in Ez. 16:5 to a child rejected at birth, but miraculously found and cared for, and brought up with every pampered blessing. Just as Moses was. Stephen described the ‘putting out’ of Moses with the same word used in the LXX for what happened to Israel in Ezekiel 16 (Acts 7:21; Ex. 2:3 LXX).

Moses, Gideon And Us

Gideon was bidden rise up to the example of Moses- for there were many similarities between his call by the Angel, and the Angelic calling which Moses received at the burning bush. Thus Gideon was called to follow the Angel in faith, “because Ehyeh is with you” (Jud. 6:16)- a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12. And yet he responds: “Alas! For I have seen Yahweh's envoy face to face!” (Jud. 6:22). Gideon knew full well that Moses had seen the Angel “face to face” (Dt. 34:10). Gideon's fear is therefore rooted in a sense that “No! I'm simply *not* Moses!”. And it's the same with us. We can read of all these reasons to believe that Moses is really our pattern, and respond that “No! This ain't me...”. But there, in the record of Gideon and his success, lies our challenge to rise up to the spirit of Moses.

4-1-2 Moses And " The reproach of Christ"

At age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this. We will see below that Paul was motivated in his rejection of worldly advantage by Moses' inspiration. And as in all things, he is our example, that we might follow Christ, who also turned down the very real possibility of temporal rulership of the world- for the sake of living the life of the cross, and thereby securing our redemption.

Even within Hebrews, the description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: " Esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt...let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, *bearing his reproach*" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection.

For Moses, " the reproach of Christ" was his having " respect unto the recompense of the reward" . He therefore must have understood in some detail that there would be a future Saviour, who would enable the eternal Kingdom promised to Abraham through his bearing the reproach of this world. Such was Moses' appreciation of this that it motivated him to reject Egypt. His motivation, therefore, was based upon a fine reflection upon the promises to Abraham and other oblique prophecies of the suffering Messiah contained in the book of Genesis. Moses knew he could have a share in the sufferings of the future saviour and thereby share his reward, because he saw the implication that Messiah would be our representative. Yet those promises are the very things which Christians now say they are bored of hearing every few weeks on a Sunday evening. No wonder we lack Moses' desire to share Christ's reproach, and thereby reject the attractions of this world. The way Moses had " respect unto the recompense of the reward" is our example; for again, even within Hebrews, we are exhorted: " Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great *recompense of reward*" (Heb. 11:26; 10:35). The Greek for " respect" means to look away from all else; indicating how single-mindedly and intensely did Moses look ahead to the Kingdom; the knowledge of which was, in terms of number of words, scant indeed. All he had was the covenants of promise.

It is worth trying to visualize the scene when Moses was "full forty years old" (Acts 7:23). It would make a fine movie. The Greek phrase could refer to Moses' birthday, and one is tempted to speculate that it had been arranged that when Moses was 40, he would become Pharaoh. Heb. 11:24 says that he refused and chose- the Greek tense implying a one off choice- to suffer affliction with God's people. It is tempting to imagine Moses at the ceremony when he should have been declared as Pharaoh, the most powerful man in his world...standing up and saying, to a suddenly hushed audience, voice cracking with shame and stress and yet some sort of proud relief that he was doing the right thing: "I, whom you know in Egyptian as Meses, am Moshe, yes, Moshe the Jew; and I decline to be Pharaoh". Imagine his foster mother's pain and anger. And then in the end, the wonderful honour would have been given to another man, who became Pharaoh. Perhaps he or his son was the one to whom Moses was to come, 40 years later. After a nervous breakdown, stuttering, speaking

with a thick accent, clearly having forgotten Egyptian... walking through the mansions of glory, along the corridors of power, to meet that man, to whom he had given the throne 40 years earlier.

" The reproach of Christ"

Paul " counted" the things of this life as loss " for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ" and his sufferings (Phil. 3:8), so that he would gain the resurrection. Moses likewise rejected the world for the same two reasons: the excellency of sharing the reproach of Christ, and secondly from respect unto the recompense of the reward, at the resurrection. He uses the same word translated " esteemed" when we read of how Moses " esteemed" the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:26). The " reproach" of Christ is the same word used concerning Christ being " reviled" on the cross. Paul felt that the intellectual heights of knowing the mind of our crucified Lord, of being able to enter into the riches than are even now in the mind of Christ (Col. 2:3) more than compensated for his sacrifice of all material things in this life. And Moses was the same; he esteemed the " reproach of Christ" , the knowledge that he was sharing the sufferings of his future saviour and would thereby enter the Kingdom which he would make possible, as far far greater than the possibility of being King of Egypt. He knew that he was sharing the sufferings of Christ, and that therefore he would be rewarded. It was this knowledge which motivated him in rejecting the riches of Egypt.

And Moses really is our example- as is Paul. It is tempting to think that intellectual appreciation cannot affect our practical lives. But once we start to sense that we really are touching minds with the Lord Jesus, that our sufferings are really making us one with the mind / spirit of Christ in Heaven, then this alone will make our material position in this life utterly meaningless. We will easily reject demanding jobs, larger houses, the security of savings- because of the sheer wonder of our knowledge of Christ and our fellowship with him. For many, this idea will be pushed off as altogether too theoretical, too abstract. And yet for a minority of brethren and sisters, the truth of all this has been realised in practice, year after year. The teaching of these passages, the examples of Paul and Moses, really are there to be copied. They are not just sweet stories to be admired, as pictures, for their beauty in themselves. There is a dynamism within them, an ability to enter and change our lives- if we are willing. *Moses really is our example*; he went through the pain of rejecting his mother, the shame of the poor intellectual falling in love with the shepherd girl, the agony of divorce from her later, the bitter loneliness of the wilderness years and apparent rejection by God for the sake of those he loved... We tend to ask for the pain to be taken away as soon as we have it, and I suppose it's natural that we should ask the Father for such things. But through much tribulation we enter the Kingdom.

Moses forsook the possibilities of Egypt not just for " the reproach of Christ" ; he was also motivated by the fact that " he endured (Gk. was vigorous), as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It was *as if* he had seen the invisible God, as he later asked to. When the disciples asked to see God, Christ said that the manifestation of His character which they had seen in him was the same thing (Jn. 14:8). Our experience of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with unveiled face like Moses, ought to be a *wondrous* experience. When Moses asked to physically see God, the Angel proclaimed the characteristics of God before him. So when we read of Moses *as it were* seeing God at the time he decided to forsake Egypt, this must mean that he so appreciated God's Name and character, he so had faith in the future Kingdom which this great Name and character promise, that he left Egypt.

The Lord Jesus fed for strength on the *majesty* of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4). Therefore an appreciation of the Name of Yahweh is what will motivate us to forsake the attractions of this temporal world. This does not mean, of course, that simply pronouncing than Name in our prayers and readings is enough. We must develop an appreciation of God's righteousness, so that we read of His demonstration of grace, of mercy, of truth, of judgement for sin, and love it, revel in it, respect it. As Paul says, if we behold the glory of the Lord as Moses did, we will by that very fact be changed into the same image of that glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Yet such an appreciation needs constant feeding and development. It is tragic, absolutely tragic, that over the next 40 years Moses lost this height of appreciation, until at the burning bush he seems to have almost completely lost his appreciation of the Name. Whatever spiritual heights we may reach is no guarantee that we must inevitably stay there. The history of our community is littered with many fine brethren who fell from such heights of spirituality.

" (Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern. He " forsook" Egypt uses the same word translated " leaving" when we read of a man leaving his parents to be joined to a wife, or of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find the lost one.

4-1-3 Moses And Paul

If Moses is the central, inspirational figure of the Old Testament scriptures and the Old Covenant, Christ is of the New Testament and New Covenant. And yet Christ was especially manifested in his matchless servant Paul. Paul seems to have consciously modelled his life upon that of Moses; he evidently saw Moses as his hero. The evidence for this is quite compelling:

Paul

" His letters, say they (Paul's detractors in the new Israel) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible...though I be rude in speech...Christ sent me...to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (mg. speech)" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:17).

Paul says he was " *taught* according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" by Gamaliel, receiving the highest wisdom possible in the Jewish world; but he uses the same word as

Moses

" I am not eloquent (mg. a man of words)...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10); this is how Moses felt he would be perceived, although actually he was formally quite fluent when in the court of Pharaoh (Acts 7:22). Paul would have remembered Stephen saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly *wisdom* and " mighty in words" . Paul felt that he too had been through Moses' experience-once mighty in words as the rising star of the Jewish world, but now like Moses he had left all that

Stephen in Acts 7:22, describing how Moses was "learned" in all the wisdom of Egypt.

Paul earnestly asked three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed (2 Cor. 12:9).

"Therefore let us keep the feast (the breaking of bread, the new Passover), not with old leaven...of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. Thus Paul warns Corinth not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), or else he would come to them and not spare.

In similar style, Paul warns the Hebrews to "serve God acceptably with reverence" because "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Paul saw visions of God which were impossible for him to explain (2 Cor. 12:1-5).

behind in order to try to save a new Israel from Judaism and paganism. As Moses *consciously* rejected the opportunity for leading the 'world' of Egypt, so Paul probably turned down the chance to be High Priest. God maybe confirmed both him and Moses in their desire for humility by giving them a speech impediment (the "thorn in the flesh" which Paul was "given", 2 Cor. 12:7).

Moses asked at least twice (maybe three times?) for him to be allowed to enter the land (Dt. 3:25; Ps. 90); but the answer was basically the same as to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee". The fact Moses had been forgiven and was at one with his God was so great that his physical entering the land was irrelevant. And for Paul likewise, temporal blessings in this life are nothing compared to the grace of forgiveness which we have received (Ex. 34:9).

This is echoing Moses' command to keep the Passover feast without leaven (Ex. 12:15; Dt. 16:3). Paul saw himself as Moses in trying to save a generally unresponsive and ungrateful Israel.

He is quoting the LXX of Num. 25:3 concerning how Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, resulting in Moses commanding the murder of all those guilty- just as Paul later did to Corinth.

He is quoting the very words of Moses in Dt. 4:24.

Moses saw the greatest visions of God of any man in the Old Testament; visions which he could

Paul several times calls himself " a servant of God" (e.g. Tit. 1:1).

The Lord Jesus seems to have encouraged Paul to see Moses as his hero. Thus he asked him to go and live in Arabia before beginning his ministry, just as Moses did (Gal. 1:17). When he appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, he spoke in terms reminiscent of the Angel's commission to Moses at the burning bush: " I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the (Jewish) people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to...turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance...Whereupon...I (Paul) was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:16-19).

Paul " *counted*" (Phil. 3:8) the riches of this world as dung, that he might have the honour of sharing the sufferings of Christ. He was motivated in this by the example of Moses in rejecting the rulership and riches of Egypt in order to share " the reproach of Christ" .

not repeat; he only repeated the words of command which he was given. He did not tell Israel what he saw in Ex. 34.

Paul is surely alluding to the frequent descriptions of Moses as God's servant.

Moses was promised that he would be protected from Pharaoh so that he could bring out God's people from the darkness of Egyptian slavery (" the power of Satan"); going from darkness to light is used by Peter as an idiom to describe Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which the new Israel should emulate (1 Pet. 2:9). Moses led Israel out of Egypt so that they might be reconciled to God, and be led by him to the promised inheritance of Canaan. As Moses was eventually obedient to that heavenly vision, so was Paul- although perhaps he too went through (unrecorded) struggles to be obedient to it, after the pattern of Moses being so reluctant.

The same word is used in Heb. 11:26 concerning how Moses " *esteemed*" the reproach of Christ greater riches than those of Egypt. Paul looked at Moses' example and was truly inspired to utterly despise worldly advantage, and to appreciate the sheer *honour* of sharing the sufferings of Christ. The height of this calling should make our wealth or poverty in this world utterly irrelevant. And we too should be inspired by Moses as Paul was. For Moses is specifically intended as our example.

He describes Epaphroditus as one of those " that ministered to my wants" (Phil. 2:25).

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death (" after my departing" , Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4.

" Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28)

To help them combat this apostasy, and to set them an example in faithfulness to the word, Paul pointed out that " I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

" I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly" (Acts 20:20).

" Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:30).

" Now, brethren I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance" (Acts 20:32).

" I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20:33)

The Greek for " ministered" is used in the LXX concerning the priests (and Joshua) ministering to Moses in practical things.

This is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32). " After my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves" (Dt. 31:29).

" Take heed unto yourselves" is repeated so many times in Deuteronomy (e.g . Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

Exactly as Moses completely revealed all God's counsel to Israel (Acts 7:33; Dt. 33:3).

As Moses shewed God to Israel and publicly taught them.

As Moses likewise warned in his farewell speech that false prophets would *arise* - and should be shunned and dealt with (Dt. 13:1).

This is the spirit of the whole of Deuteronomy, Moses' farewell warning: love the word, be obedient to it, because this will lead you to inherit the promised land for ever. He pleaded with them to " take heed to thyself" that they kept God's word and taught it to their children, so that they would enter the land (Dt. 4:1,9). These words are alluded to by Paul in 1 Tim.4:16, where he says that attention to the doctrine of the new covenant will likewise save us and those who hear us.

This is the spirit of Moses in Num. 16:15: " I have not taken one ass from them" . Paul maybe had these words in mind again in 2 Cor. 7:2: "

We have wronged no man...we have defrauded no man" .

" Neither count I my life dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24). " I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). Paul is here rising up to imitate Moses at perhaps his finest hour- willing, at least in principle, to give up his eternal life for the sake of Israel's salvation. The extent of Paul's love for natural Israel does not come out that strongly in the Acts and epistles; but this allusion to Moses says it all. The RVmg. renders Rom. 9:3: "I could pray...", more clearly alluding to Moses' prayer that the people might enter and he be rejected. Yet Paul perceived that God would not accept a substitute offering like that; and hence he says he *could* pray like this. In essence, he had risen to the same level. Likewise he wrote in 1 Thess. 2:8 RV that he was "well pleased [i.e. theoretically willing] to impart unto, you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us". He perceived the difference between mere imparting of the Gospel in preaching, and being willing to give ones' soul, ones salvation, because of a heart that bleeds for others. No wonder Paul was such a convincing preacher, with such love behind his words.

" My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

Throughout 2 Cor. 3:15-4:6, Paul comments on how Moses' face shone with God's glory, and yet he spoke to Israel through a veil, with the result that Israel did not appreciate God's glory.

This was the spirit of Moses, in being willing to give his own physical and eternal life for the salvation of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32).

Who else prayed like this for Israel's salvation? Only Moses. He tried to match the intensity of Moses' prayers for Israel on Sinai.

Paul uses this to explain why Israel did not respond to his preaching; " if *our* preaching be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Paul therefore saw himself and his fellow preachers as like Moses, radiating forth the glory of God in the Gospel

He speaks of him and all preachers of the true Christian Gospel as "able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6)- clear allusion to Moses as the minister of the old, inferior covenant.

of Jesus Christ, to an Israel which had the veil upon their heart. This allusion must have so angered the Jews- to suggest that Christian preachers were like Moses!

These copious similarities raise an interesting point: if we love the word, if we enter into the spirit of the characters we read of there, should we not model ourselves upon some of them? If the word is a living word, surely we should be able to sense the spirit of these characters in our own experience of life, they should drive us onwards. Paul's conscious emulation of Moses is not the only example of this. He himself invites us to see him as a similar role model. We have shown elsewhere how Jonathan and Saul both seem to have had Gideon as a hero ⁽¹⁾. It is also possible to show that Jeremiah saw Job in the same role (just glance down the marginal references to Job in Jeremiah). There are times when Jeremiah quotes the very words of Job as being relevant to his own experiences. The point of such conscious emulation is that we are copying the spirit of Christ as it was displayed in these men. Thus Paul asks us to copy him *so that* we might more accurately reflect the pattern of the Lord Jesus; he was "a Christ-appointed model" to this end.

Notes

(1) See *David and Jonathan*.

4.2 Moses: The Path Of Growth

4-2-1 Events In The Life Of Moses

A read through the records will indicate that Moses was somewhat temperamental in his faith. For the first forty years of his life, he scarcely let his light show. Yet all the time his conscience was active, enabling him to build up towards heights of spiritual achievement few of us can achieve. At the age of 40, he had a flash of spiritual devotion; he rejected the opportunity for greatness in Egypt, possibly the opportunity to become king of Egypt (as Christ had the opportunity to become king of the world in his wilderness temptations). Yet after that, he went into 40 years of decline. In the eyes of men, he was a finished man. He had gone away from God's people, he was living in a family of idolaters, and had married one of them. His marriage went wrong, he divorced his wife, and picked up some other woman. He didn't circumcise his children, and thus he despised his covenant relationship with God. Eighty years is a long time. They were eighty years of at best mediocre commitment to the God of Israel, with only the occasional flash of spiritual brilliance. Yet this man Moses went on to become one of the greatest spiritual men there has ever been, a man who came closer to God than all others except the Lord Jesus. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Dt. 34:10). The Lord Jesus was "like unto" Moses (Dt. 18:18)- a high enough commendation for Moses. The following notes show that Moses achieved this through an appreciation of God manifestation in himself and in Israel.

Because of his weakness, we are able to relate to Moses, and see him as our example. It is possible that Moses was not circumcised (Ex. 6:12,30); which would make him even closer to us. The Lord Jesus encouraged us to see ourselves as Moses: " If thou wouldest believe (in Christ), thou shouldest see the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40) is without doubt an allusion to Moses' experience of seeing God's glory- an experience which in Jewish eyes marked Moses out as the greatest man who had ever lived. The veneration in which Moses was and is held in the Jewish world is hard for Gentiles to enter into. A glance through rabbinical commentaries on the Pentateuch will illustrate this well. And here was the Lord Jesus saying that through faith in him, we can share the experience of Moses, we can rise to the spiritual heights of the man who spoke to God face to face as a man speaks to his friend.

Main events in the life of Moses

EVENT	REFERENCE	SPIRITUALITY
		(Score out of 10)
1. 40 years in Egypt, hiding the fact he was an Israelite, not preaching the Gospel to anyone, appearing as an Egyptian. He learnt all the philosophy of Egypt, and was a prominent public speaker, with the possibility of becoming the next Pharaoh. According to non-Biblical tradition, he was the leader of the Egyptian army.	Ex. 2:19; Acts 7:22	2 (over say 25 years, from the age of 15 - 40)
2. Crisis at age 40. He refused the riches of Egypt , and consciously chose to suffer affliction with the Israelites.He really wanted to save Israel and free them from their enemies, and make them live at peace among themselves.	Heb. 11:24Heb. 11:26Acts 7:23-28	8
3. However, he didn't want Egypt to know that he was doing this; he thought he could do it secretly. Once he realised that people knew what he was trying to do, he was afraid. His fearfulness has similarities with that of spiritually weak Jacob, who fled from the face of Laban into the	Ex. 2:14Ex. 2:15 cp. Gen.31:22; 35:7Ex. 4:19	2

unknown, as Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. Thus God encouraged him after forty years that he need no longer fear: " Return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life" .

4. But then he rallied his faith and left Egypt, without (at the point of leaving) fearing the anger of Pharaoh. He so strongly believed, it was as if he physically saw God- as he asked.

Heb. 11:27

8

5. Moses flees to Midian, where he helps some unknown shepherd women from being abused by some rough men; he did this without at first receiving any reward, and without the women wanting him to go with them; although they thought he was an Egyptian, showing that he still concealed his relationship with God.

Ex. 2:17Ex.2:19

6

5a. Moses " supposed his brethren would have understood how that God *by his hand* would deliver them" ; but God told Moses at the bush: " I will stretch out *my hand*, and smite Egypt...." . Moses had yet to learn the meaning of God manifestation through men.

Acts 7:25 cp. Ex. 3:20

6. Moses " was content to dwell" with the father of the women. The Hebrew for " content" comes from a root which means weakness of mind; the implication is that he easily yielded to this man.

Ex.2: 21

2

7. " And he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter" . She was not one of the covenant people; she was the daughter of a pagan priest (Ex. 18:11 implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods); she did not circumcise their children. Should Moses have married her? The fact Moses did not bother circumcising his son shows he was not really serious about his relationship with God; God tried to kill him because of this. God tried to kill Moses because of this; this shows how serious this was in God's eyes. Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). Circumcision was a sign of the covenant through Isaac, hence the resentment and bitterness of Zipporah over the circumcision issue; and it seems Moses capitulated to her on this. Their marriage is sure proof that fundamental spiritual differences at the start can only lead to anger and break up later on.

Ex. 2:21; 3:1; 4:25

3

The way the Lord "tried to kill" Moses (Ex. 4:24) indicates how God's intentions can be changed by human actions; and it also reflects the limitation of power experienced by the Angel, who presumably was the one who 'tried' to do this but was thwarted by a woman. However in our context of Moses' weakness we need to reflect how this incident echoes how Pharaoh sought to kill Moses in Ex. 2:15. Even through his weakness, Moses was being

taught that his personal salvation and continuation in life was by grace. Moses was saved on this occasion by a Gentile woman, Zipporah- just as he had been saved as a baby by another Gentile woman- as well as by the quick-wittedness of his own mother and sister. As Zipporah mediated with the Angel and saved Moses by touching his son with blood, so Moses would save Israel through his mediation with God and through the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:13,22,23), as well as later throwing blood upon the people (Ex. 24:8). What are we to make of all these echoes and connections of thought? Perhaps that Moses was indeed weak at this time, was saved by grace alone, and yet on that basis he was called to in his turn also save the weak through appealing to God's grace.

8. However, Moses' children had names which showed some faith, and a recognition he was a stranger in the land where he was living; he lived as a stranger in Midian. Few people live in a country for 40 years without feeling they belong to it. But his mind was in the past, in how God had been good to his father, and how God had saved him from Pharaoh's death threat.

Ex. 18:3,4; Acts 7:29

4

9. Moses' marriage was weak. 40 years later, Zipporah's frustration boiled over: " Surely a bloody

Ex. 4:25,26 (see N.I.V.);
18:2

2

husband art thou to me...then she said (again), A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" . As a descendant of Ishmael she was angry at Isaac's choice and circumcision. This is probably the closest the Bible gets to recording the real life use of taboo language. " Because of the circumcision" suggests she despised Moses' religion. Moses divorced her. It also seems from Ex. 4:23,25 that God tried to kill Moses' son because Moses was not fully believing that God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn. The whole account in Ex. 4:24-26 of meeting with an Angel who sought to slay him evidently connects with the account of Balaam. Like Balaam, although Moses was going on a journey with God's permission, it could be inferred that his attitude to God's word was likewise wrong.

10. He " took" (not married) another woman, an Ethiopian- probably a slave woman, or possibly a cheap woman. Moses' brother and sister were ashamed that their brother was involved with a woman like this. Whoever she was, Moses was under the one man: one woman standard of the garden of Eden. And further, he "put away" this woman- Ex. 18:2 LXX is the same "put away" as in 1 Cor. 7:11-13. Moses allowed divorce for the hardness of Israel's hearts (Mt. 19:8) and yet he himself appears to have divorced her- for the hardness of his heart?

Num. 12:1 AVmg.

2

11. God appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in the bush, but Moses had to be told to take off his shoes

Ex. 3:5Ex. 3:6 cp. Gen. 3:8;
Is. 6:5Ex. 3:7Acts 7:31 cp.

2

as a sign of respect- even though taking off shoes was understood as a token of respect and recognition of sin (see 2 Sam. 15:30). " Draw not nigh hither...for the place whereon thou standest is holy" sounds as if Moses did not appreciate the holiness of God. It even seems that Moses had forgotten the significance of God's Name, even though it had been revealed to Abraham (Ex. 3:13). Moses' fear to look upon God suggests a bad conscience. The double repetition " Moses, Moses" may be some kind of rebuke. " I *have*" seen the affliction of Israel could suggest that Moses felt God was not sensitive to the pain of His children; he had been living for 40 years feeling forgotten by God.Moses " wondered" at what he saw and heard at the burning bush- a Greek word which is often used in a negative sense concerning people lacking faith and insight when they should have had it.

Mt. 15:31; Mk. 6:51; Lk. 8:25; 24:41; Acts 13:41

12. " I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people...And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go?....And God said...they shall hearken to thy voice...And Moses answered...They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice (he didn't seem to believe God's promise to inspire him)...I am not eloquent, neither heretofore (i.e. in the past)...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (although this was untrue- earlier Moses had been an eloquent speaker in Egypt; actually he was just the right man to do what God wanted)...and the anger of the Lord was kindled

Ex. 3:10,11,18;
4:1,10,13,14; Acts 7:22, 25

against Moses" . Remember that God is *very* slow to this kind of anger (Ex. 34:6). Forty years earlier, Moses had understood, presumably from a direct revelation from God, that God would deliver Israel through him. But he had lost faith in that promise, and was arguing back against God. This was the outcome of many years of spiritual slipping. " Send...by the hand of him whom *thou wilt* send" (alluding to God's Name, I will be) can be seen as indifference; perhaps Moses was saying 'As you do what you will, your name is I will be, then if you send by me, send by men, I can't resist'.

12. Moses does actually leave Midian and begins to ask Pharaoh to let Israel go

Ex. 4:29 - 5:5Ex. 4:18,19

6

12a. He seems to make the excuse to Jethro that he is homesick for his family who are still in Egypt. And yet straight after this, the Lord confirms him in his desire to return. Moses asks Jethro for permission to return to Egypt to see whether his Hebrew brethren are "still alive" (Ex. 4:18)- yet God had just told Moses that there were indeed Hebrews still alive there who he will lead out of Egypt. Of course Moses *may* have been referring to his literal family; but it's possible that his words to Jethro imply a lack of faith in God's word. At the very least, he was shy to share God's word to him with Jethro. In this context it may be significant that the words

3

God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh at this time in Ex. 4:23 are in fact never said by Moses throughout the dialogue with Pharaoh recorded in Ex. 11 and 12.

12b. God had explained to Moses what He wished him to tell Pharaoh: "Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God" (Ex. 3:18). But Moses actually doesn't say those exact words. Instead he says: "Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness...The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Yahweh our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword" (Ex. 5:1,3). This seems perilously similar to the way in which Eve added to Yahweh's words when telling the serpent that actually, God had told Adam not to *even touch* the fruit. Moses appears to be painting Yahweh as somewhat draconian and threatening of him personally as well as Israel- as if to say 'Well sir, please do us this favour, or else our God is gonna get mad with us'. Perhaps this was actually how Moses misperceived Yahweh; or perhaps he added to Yahweh's

words in order to make his appeal sound more plausible.

13. Moses is easily discouraged by the fact that Israel reject him: " Moses returned unto Yahweh, and said, Lord...why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh...thou hast not delivered thy people at all" . The Yahweh / Lord difference may suggest that he got over familiar with the Angel, forgetting the degree to which that Angel carried God's Name.

Ex. 5:22,23

2

14. God replied by telling him to declare the covenant Name to Israel, and remind them that therefore God would surely save them. But they again failed to respond. " And Moses spake before the Lord, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" . Yet God had promised Moses earlier that Israel *would* hear him (3:18). God solemnly told him to go and speak to Pharaoh, because God had told him to do so. But Moses has the cheek to say exactly the same words to God a second time. In a chapter which speaks much of Moses' reluctance, the record encourages us: " These are that Aaron and Moses...these are they which spake to Pharaoh...these are that Moses and Aaron" (Ex. 6:26,27).

Ex. 6:12,30

2

15. Moses and Aaron agreed to continue speaking to Pharaoh and Israel; they " did as the Lord commanded them, so did they" .

Ex. 7:6

6

This is saying the same thing twice-
stressing their obedience.

16. The record of the miracles is framed to show God commanding Moses to do certain things to bring and end the plagues, and him obedient to this. But Ex. 8:9 RV contains a strange sentence: "Have thou this glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee...to destroy the frogs?". It could be that, in the words of Bro. Mark Vincent, "Moses with an excessive and sarcastic politeness, is asking, 'And (pray tell me!) when exactly would you like the frogs to be gone?', as though Pharaoh might miss them and fondly wish them to stay around for a couple more days". This to me doesn't score very highly in spiritual terms.

Ex. 7,8,9

73

17. " By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Israel). By faith *they* (Israel) passed through the Red Sea" . Yet at this time Israel were weak in faith, they passed through the Red Sea cuddling the idols of Egypt, from the day God knew them they were rebellious against Him; so runs the refrain of the prophets. It seems that due to Moses' faith Israel were saved by the Passover lamb, through his faith they passed through the Red Sea; his faith was so great, his desire for their salvation so strong, that God counted it to the rest of Israel. Thus " he (Moses, in the context) brought them (Israel) out" of Egypt (Acts 7:36,38). This points forward to Christ's redemption of us, and also

Heb. 11:28,29

8

indicates how quickly Moses' faith rallied. And yet just prior to crossing the Sea, God rebuked Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" - even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (Ex. 14:15 cp. 13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea. Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn't), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side.

18. Moses' song of triumph after the Red Sea deliverance shows a fine spirituality. However, note his possible misunderstanding in Ex. 15:13,17- that Siani was to be "the place" where God would dwell with Israel.	Ex. 15	8
--	--------	---

19. Israel's murmurings about the lack of food did not discourage Moses; " the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: for what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord" . Here we see the beginnings of some real humility in Moses, due to his appreciation of God manifestation in him.	Ex. 16:8	8
---	----------	---

20. Moses' victory against Amalek due to his faith, in which he typified our Lord's crucifixion.	Ex. 17:8-16	8
--	-------------	---

21. Moses becomes reconciled to his ex-wife Zipporah whom he had divorced, and has the humility to accept the advice of his ex-father in law Jethro. This all indicates an increasing humility. 21a. Moses accepts Jethro's advice on the basis	Ex. 18:2-27Ex. 18:1,18,23	8
---	---------------------------	---

that he will "surely wear away" (Ex. 18:18); even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace" - which they didn't. Num. 10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic "eyes" of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error in this on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarrelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

22. Moses is called up into Sinai and speaks with God. While there, Israel turn away from God, and God wants to make Moses' family His people and reject Israel. But Moses argues with God against this, again showing his humility and his appreciation of God manifestation in Israel, and his earnest desire that God would save Israel. "He said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath". This was only months after his weak faith and reluctance to lead Israel out of Egypt. He says that he will "go up (and) make an atonement"

Ex.32:10-14, 30-32; Ps. 105:23

10

(Ex. 32:30). And yet he knew the principle that atonement was impossible without shedding blood. Yet he goes further than that: "Blot me, I *pray thee* (he really wanted to do this) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32)- i.e. the book of salvation (Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Rev. 20:12). Moses is willing to give his physical life and also his eternal salvation so that Israel can enter the land. Surely he reached matchless heights of selflessness. Note how God's anger "waxed hot" and so did that of Moses. But Moses asks God not to wax hot in anger (Ex. 32:10,11,19). What are we to make of this? Surely, positively, Moses was totally in tune with the feelings of God. And yet he does himself what he asks God not to do. What score would we give Moses for this?

23. God spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. God knew Moses by name (Ex. 33:12,17) and so He shews Moses *His Name* (Ex. 33:17,19)- there developed a mutuality between the two. Yet God told Moses that because Israel were stiffnecked, therefore He could not go up with them (Ex. 33:5). Moses agrees the people are stiffnecked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (Ex. 34:9). And God did! He acted according to how broad was Moses' conception of God's grace. If Abraham's conception of grace had been even broader, perhaps Sodom would've been saved... Moses' achievement is all the more remarkable because he himself struggled with grace. God assures

Ex. 33:11

Moses that he has found grace in His eyes [i.e. before the Angel with whom Moses met?]. And yet Moses says: "If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way that I may know thee, to the end that I may find grace in thy sight" (Ex. 33:12,13 RV). Despite having been told that he had found grace, Moses still wanted confirmation... as if the voice of God wasn't enough! And maybe there is even the implication that he mistakenly thought that he needed more *knowledge* of God before he could find that grace... as if it depended upon his own mental faculties. And yet God patiently assures Moses yet again: Thou *hast* found grace in my sight", and goes on to proclaim His Name to Moses. "I *will be gracious* to whom I will be gracious" (Ex. 33:19) was surely said specifically to Moses, given the context of Moses' doubts about his receipt of God's grace. The coming down of Yahweh to pronounce His Name was, in the context, to show how far God would go to assure Moses that yes, His grace towards Moses was real. We too struggle with grace, and are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance.

24. Moses has the spiritual ambition to ask to see the face of God Himself. He is given the greatest God manifestation any man has seen except the Lord Jesus. It's a delightful essay in the possibilities of spiritual growth that the man who once forgot God's Name later came to so finely appreciate it that he was given the finest revelation of it.

Ex. 33:13-23; 34:9

Despite this, Moses still has the humility to question whether in fact he has found grace (overlooking of his sins) in God's eyes. However, there is maybe a connection between Moses hiding in the " cleft of the rock" (Ex. 33:22) and Elijah hiding in a similar place to witness a theophany whose aim was to *humble* him. Is. 2:10-12 makes a similar connection.

25. Ex. 39 and 40 each contain a marked repetition of the fact that the whole Tabernacle was built and arranged by Moses exactly as God commanded him. It was in this sense that Moses was faithful in all his house- as the writer to the Hebrews twice stresses

Ex.
39:1,5,7,21,26,29,31,32,42;
40:16,19,21,23,25,27,29,32;
Heb.3:2,5

8

26. Num. 10 and 11 seem to portray Moses in weakness. He pleads with his brother in law not to leave them, because without him they would not know where to camp in the wilderness; " thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" . Yet the Angels are God's eyes, they were seeking out resting places for Israel in the wilderness; the record reminds us of this straight afterwards (Num. 10:33). Jethro elsewhere suggested that Moses needed more help in leading the people because otherwise fading thou wilt fade away' (Ex. 18:18 A.V.mg.); at the end of his days, the record seems to highlight the untruth of this by commenting that his natural strength was not faded (Dt. 34:7). So Jethro's advice wasn't always spiritual. Moses is depressed by Israel complaining

Num. 10: 29-32; 11:11-15, 21-23

2

at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: " Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex.33:17)...have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto *their* fathers (not " our" - notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should *I* give flesh unto all this people...if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, *if* I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" . God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt. 32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Although compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: " Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?" . And the Angel angrily replied: " Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not" . If he had faith, Moses surely would have realised that if God could provide manna, he could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of

Num. 11:28

8

depression and also high spirituality.

Moses states that "I have *not* found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:11) when God had specifically said that Moses had (Ex. 33:12). At that time too, Moses had questioned this Divine assurance (Ex. 33:13); he had the same struggle to believe God's grace as we have. God had repeatedly assured Moses that "you *have* found grace in My eyes" (Ex. 33:17; 34:9); but still Moses doubts it. "Kill me, I pray, if I have [indeed] found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:15) would therefore appear to be a very inappropriate sarcasm by Moses-against the God of all grace. At the time when Moses doubts whether he really has found grace, the God who speaks to Moses face to face then turns and shows Moses only His back parts (Ex. 33:11,20,22). This is alluded to in Jer. 18:17 and there interpreted as being a sign of God's anger- to turn away His face and show His back parts. God was so angry with Moses' disbelief in His grace.

Moses argues that because God had laid the burden of His people on his shoulders, this was such a curse as to disprove God's claim to have lavished grace upon Moses (Num. 11:11). But the language of God's people being laid upon a man's shoulders as a burden is in fact the language of the cross. Moses was therefore rejecting the cross. He bitterly complains that the people are God's, not his, and therefore it is

unreasonable for God to expect Moses to carry them and feed them (:11-13). He didn't want to manifest God, nor do the work of Messiah (Is. 40:11), even though he was intended to be the prophet like unto Messiah (Dt. 18:18).

Joshua urged Moses to "forbid" or [Heb.] 'imprison' Eldad and Medad for prophesying (Num. 11:28). He fell into the mistake so many have done; shut up or silence a genuine man of God, for fear that the institution, the existing administration, would be undermined. Perhaps they were prophesying of Moses' death? Whatever, Moses' refusal to shut them up seems to indicate an openness to God's Spirit and way of working, even if it threatened to undermine his authority. He shows such a genuine spirit when he replies that he wished that all God's people were the spiritual leaders.

27. Miriam and Aaron try to humiliate Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had palled up with in earlier days. But his response was humility itself; so much so that the record comments: " The man Moses was very meek (some suggest the Hebrew implies 'made very meek', as a process), above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" . What a compliment! The most humble man that was then alive; and humility is of great value

Num. 12:1, 13

9

to God, according to the Proverbs and 1 Pet. 3:4. That the leader of 3 million people for forty years could be the meekest man is a sure wonder. Perhaps this comment is made at this point because Moses weakness in the previous chapter had perhaps further developed his humility. He truly cries unto God to heal Miriam of the punishment she was given for criticising him.

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---|
| 28. Israel want to return to Egypt. God again wants to destroy them and make Moses' family His people. But Moses successfully asks God to forgive Israel for this rather than take the personal honour God offered him. | Num. 14:11-20 | 9 |
| 29. God openly declares His acceptance of Moses to all Israel. | Num. 16 | 9 |
| 30. God again wants to destroy Israel and make of Moses' family a new people. Again, for the third time, Moses knows God well enough, he has enough faith, enough humility and enough true love for Israel to ask God- successfully- to relent from this. That God wanted to do this three times shows His great love for Moses. | Num. 16:44-50 | 9 |
| 31. God again openly declares His acceptance of Moses in front of all Israel in the incident of the rods. | Num. 17 | 9 |
| 32. Moses' faith slips for a moment; his spirit is provoked by Israel, so that he speaks unadvisedly with his lips and is therefore barred from | Num. 20:12; Ps. 106:32,33 | 1 |

entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he *turned himself* and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex.32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted? Note carefully the process of failure here. Moses and Aaron were told to *both* speak to the rock, and this would result in Moses personally bringing forth water: "Gather thou [singular] the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye [plural- both of them] unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou [Moses personally] shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink" (Num. 20:8). But Moses seems to have dismissed Aaron's intended involvement and assumed that he alone could bring the water out with his rod. Yet Aaron was also condemned for this incident-

presumably because he didn't speak to the rock but just let Moses smite the rock with his silence meaning consent.

33. The people again complain, and God punishes them with serpents; Moses' prayer for them is accepted. These prayers for others' salvation must have required intense faith and acceptability to be heard. Num. 21:7 8

34. Moses did not get bitter at his rejection, nor disinterested in Israel's future because he would not be with them in the land. He asked God to provide a replacement for him. Num. 27:16,17 8

34a. Moses seems to express his own weakness in his final speeches to Israel in Deuteronomy. He recalls how even towards the end of the wilderness journey, God told him to contend with Sihon in battle (Dt. 2:24); and yet Moses admits: "I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will turn neither unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me food for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only let me pass through on my feet" (Dt. 2:26-28). And yet God by grace to Moses hardened Sihon's heart so that there was a battle in Dt. 2:24-28 2

which, again by grace, he gave Israel victory.

35. The love of Moses for Israel as reflected in his final address to them in Deuteronomy, his knowledge of them, his sensitivity to their weakness, his constant desire for them to be spiritually strong and to enter the land; God's respect of him at the end of his life, shown in his burial and in subsequent comments about him. Although Moses is at a spiritual peak in Deuteronomy, he does repeatedly comment- almost under his breath as it were- that he was not going to enter the land "for your sakes", and that he was thereby bearing the anger of God against Israel (e.g. Dt. 4:21 etc.). Whilst in a sense this was true, God's anger was against Moses personally regarding the sin of striking the rock. Given that "that rock was Christ", his inappropriate striking of it was some kind of symbolic crucifixion of Christ. He was in the wrong- the record of the event makes that clear. And yet at the end of his life, Moses is blaming Israel for his sin and his exclusion from the land. Perhaps he was indicating his understanding of how his prayer to not enter the land for their sakes was being answered. On the other hand, one could argue that even on the last day of his life, Moses never came to terms with that sin, sought to justify himself in the eyes of Israel, to shift the blame... and yet even then, God's grace was big enough to accept him. Quite how to score Moses on this point will always be debatable, but the exercise certainly provokes a lot of

Deuteronomy

10

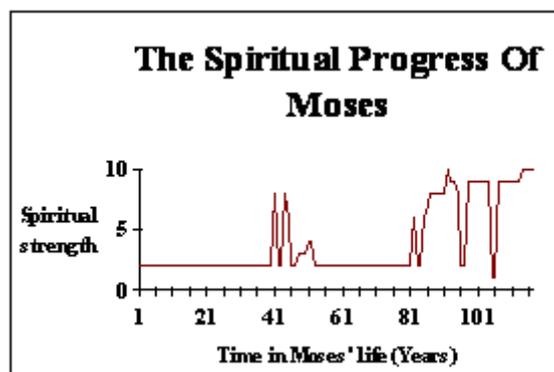
introspection about our own attitudes to public confession of sin, both in ourselves and in others, and its relationship to God's ultimate acceptance of a person.

4-2-2 The Spiritual Growth Of Moses

It may be that some may feel that the above analysis is hard on Moses in his early years. But consider these two points:

1. Moses was encouraged that God really would work through him by his arm becoming leprous and then being cured, and by being given the power to grab hold of a snake. Snakes and leprosy were evident symbols of sin. Surely God was encouraging Moses that with His help, he really could overcome his sinfulness and achieve the work he had been given to do.
2. In Psalm 90 Moses pleads for his rejection and that of his people to be reversed. He says that the reason for their rejection was God setting their "secret sins" in the light of His countenance (Ps. 90:8). He felt his rejection was due to his secret sins- not the one painfully public failure. The Hebrew for "secret" means 'that behind the veil'; it is from the same root as the Hebrew for 'young girl', i.e. a veiled one. He felt the sins he had committed behind the veil had been exposed in the light of the Angel's face. Remember that Moses *always* appeared to Israel with a vail (Ex. 34:33-35; 2 Cor. 3:16-18 RV), only removing it when he spoke face to face with the Angel, radiating the light of God's glory to him. It seems Moses is alluding to this in Ps. 90:8; he felt that he had many secret sins, hidden to Israel, but completely open to the Angel when he met with him. Likewise Israel were rejected because of the sins of their *heart* rather than their grosser failures (Acts 7:39; and see the reason for their condemnation given in many other passages). "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Ps. 90:8) is not Moses reproaching God; rather is it him soberly recognising why they were barred from the land. Notice "our iniquities...our sins" - Moses was completely at one with condemned Israel, he knew exactly how they felt- just as the Lord Jesus with us.

It makes a good exercise to copy the above table with the scores in the last column blanked out, and then ask a group of Bible readers to argue out what they think the right scores are. And then draw a graph and join the dots:



The spiritual growth of Moses was jagged. A consideration of this graph and our own likely graph reveals that we ought to be more careful how we judge the weaknesses and strengths of brethren. Their and our present situation must be seen in the context of the graph of life. In the bigger picture of Moses' life, it's clear that God was working with him according to a pattern. His 120 years of life fall into three distinct periods of 40 years. His 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness were to prepare him for 40 years of shepherding God's people in the same wilderness. The burning bush was to prepare him for the awesome meeting with God in the burning mountain- note how the unusual Hebrew word used for "bush", *seneh*, echoes the name of the mountain, Sinai. Everything was used by God in His personal development plan for Moses.

And so the Moses who could plead "Kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my own wretchedness" was the same Moses who rose to the heights of offering his place in the Kingdom for Israel. For many of us, our whole lives are characterised by Moses pattern of spiritual growth until age 80. Yet the progressive humbling of him by God really did have an effect. He went on to rise up to the very heights of appreciating God's righteousness, until finally he gathers all Israel before him at the age of 120, perhaps helped up on to a tall rock from where he could address the whole nation. Perhaps they cheered as he first stood up. And then there would have been enthralled silence as he spoke, his eyes fixing on a few random faces. He had gathered them together to say farewell, from the man who had loved them more than any other man. It would have been an awesome sight. Remember Balaam's words, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24:5,6). And there was Moses, "an hundred and twenty years old...his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Dt. 34:7). Perhaps there were 'shouters' who relayed his words to the whole assembly, so that they all heard him. Which means he would have spoken sentence by sentence, very slowly, occasionally drinking from a water bottle.

The word of his God was in his heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. "Yea, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the "he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. "Yea, he loved the people... they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" . And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy, written at the end point of the spiritual growth of Moses. But in reality that was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. In those hours as he stood there saying those words, and then he sung that song to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, and then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. Even before that, surely his voice had faltered, even broken down, when he spoke to them of the tragedy of their future apostasy, of how the gentle and sensitive woman among them would eat her own children. And how the days would come when they would awake in the morning and say 'Would God it were evening'. As he foresaw in essence the horrors of the Nazi camps, and of so much else...he could only have said those words with tears and passion. For "he loved the people". If ever there was an understatement...

The pathos of the scene is wondrous. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see a type, more than a type, a superb image, of the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, claiming that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; until at age 40 he was honest with himself, he told the world who his real mother was, he refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like any of us.

And perhaps he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11). How fitting that at the top, he met that Angel again. The same love, the same open-faced friendship would have been there. The Angel showed him the Kingdom, opening his eyes to see to the very boundaries of the land. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Out of weakness, such weakness, he was made strong. His temperamental faith, with its flashes of devotion, turned into a solid rock, a real ongoing relationship with a loving Father. *Every one* of his human relationships had failed: with his brother and sister, with his wife, with his people. But finally that lonely man found his rest in Yahweh, Israel's God, he came to know Him as his friend and saviour. No wonder he is held up, by way of allusion throughout the New Testament, as our example.

4-3-1 Themes Of Moses In Deuteronomy

We have seen how Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. We have seen how his faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. *For their sakes* he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that *therefore* "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory ⁽¹⁾. Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). We have seen that Moses is a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus ⁽²⁾. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). As Christ declared God's Name just before his death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX). Personally I find the last hours of Moses so moving. As we read through the Law, you sense that tragic moment must come; rather like as we read through the Gospels. Moses saw at the end that there was no third way: it was either complete dedication and salvation, or rebellion and condemnation. He pleaded with them to see that "this day...this day...this day" he set before them life and death, forgiveness or salvation (Dt. 30:15-19). The

Lord Jesus had His mind on this when He told the thief with the same emphasis that " this day" He could tell them that he would be saved, not condemned (Lk. 23:46). He felt like Moses, but greater than Moses, in that He not only set before men the choice, but could grant them the salvation they sought. Personally I find the last hours of Moses so moving. As we read through the Law, you sense that tragic moment must come; rather like as we read through the Gospels.

So finally Moses gathers Israel before him at the age of 120. It would have been an awesome sight. Remember Balaam's words, " How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24:5,6). And there was Moses, " an hundred and twenty years old...his eye was not dim, nor his *natural force abated*" (Dt. 34:7). Strong defines those Hebrew words as meaning that his newness, his youth, had not been chased away (AV " abated") by the years, as happens to most men. He had all the energy, intellectually and physically, of a 21 year old, yet with all the sadness and knowledge of God of his 120 years. All the times we read he " rose up early" to commune with God demonstrate his energy, his enthusiasm for the word of the God of Israel (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4).

The word of his God was in his heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. " Yea, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the " he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. " Yea, he loved the people....they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" . This is God's comment on that last meeting between Moses and Israel. And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy (it takes about four hours to read it through loud), writes a copy of the Law (31:9; notice how Dt. 24 was *written* by Moses, Mk. 10:5), sings a Song to that silent multitude (surely with a lump in his throat, especially at points like 32:15), and then he turns and climbs the mountain to see the land and meet his death. The fact it all happened on his birthday just adds to the pathos of it all (Dt. 31:2). The huge amount of work which he did on that last day of his life looks forward to the Lord's huge achievement in the day of his death. No wonder Yahweh describes that day of Moses' death with an intensive plural: " The days (i.e. the one great time / day) approach (s.w. " at hand" , " made ready") that thou must die" (Dt. 31:14). It seems that he said much of the book in one day; hence his repeated mention of the phrase " this day" throughout the book. The people were often reminded that they were about to "go over [Jordan] to possess" the land (Dt. 11:8,11 RV), as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost. In reality that speech of Deuteronomy was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. Not only do we have a powerful type of the Lord Jesus in all this; Israel assembled before him really do represent us. Dt.32:36 (" the Lord shall judge his people") is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us.

The Love Of Moses In Deuteronomy

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two goes. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. . " Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. " Fear the Lord thy God" of Exodus

becomes "love the Lord thy God" in Deuteronomy. There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of his maturity. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too. The following are just some aspects of his relationship with Israel.

The way Moses sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire (Dt. 5:5), whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. He speaks as if he assumed that surely Israel would love their neighbour as themselves: "Thy brother...or thy friend, which is as thine own soul" almost unconsciously reveals the depth of Moses' positive faith in their obedience, even though on the other hand he clearly understood their future apostasy (Dt. 13:6). He even assumed that Israel would not possibly try to break through the barriers around Sinai to "gaze"- "for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount and sanctify it" (Ex. 19:23). He over-estimated their obedience, so much did he love them.

Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of his brethren represented him (Mt. 25:40 Gk.). Thus Moses stresses how they were not to go into the house of a poor man to take back his pledge (Dt. 24:10); Moses could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Exodus 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. Indeed, the whole passage in Deuteronomy (24:6-17) about pledges is quite an expansion upon what the Law actually said in Ex. 22. And this from a man who could have been the king of Egypt, who could have had the world. What marvellous similarity with our Lord! Moses' sensitivity is shown by the introduction of other expansions upon existing commandments; e.g. "thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Dt. 25:4). This is quoted by Paul as being actually part of the Law (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), showing that Moses was so attune with the mind of God that these practical extensions which his sensitivity led him to command Israel were indeed the inspired commandments of God.

Moses' spiritual pinnacle was characterized by arriving at a profound depth of love. Love is likewise seen by Paul as "the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14), the sign of ultimate maturity.

Knowledge Of Their Weakness

In this time of final spiritual maturity, Moses was keenly aware of his own spiritual failings (as Paul and Jacob were in their last days). This is one of the great themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He begins his Deuteronomy address by pointing out how grievously they had failed thirty eight years previously, when they refused to enter the good land. He reminds them how that although God had gone before them in Angelic power (Dt. 1:30,33), they had

asked for their spies to go before them. And Moses admits that this fatal desire for human strength to lead them to the Kingdom " pleased me well" (Dt. 1:23). It seems to me that here Moses is recognizing his own failure. Perhaps he is even alluding to his weakness in wanting Jethro to go before them " instead of eyes" , in place of the Angel-eyes of Yahweh (Num. 10:31-36). Moses at the end was aware of his failures. And yet he also shows his thorough appreciation of the weakness of his people. Moses admits at the end that Israel's faithless idea to send out spies "pleased me well"- when it shouldn't have done (Dt. 1:23,32,33). He realized more and more his own failure as he got older.

Moses often reminds them that he knows that they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). He knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king (Dt. 17:14). He knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (Dt. 15:4mg, 11). He knew they would accidentally commit murder and would need a way of escape; therefore he twice repeats and explains the law concerning the cities of refuge (Dt. 4:42; 19:5). These being a symbol of the future Messiah (Heb. 6:18), this emphasis would suggest that like Paul and Jacob, the mind of Moses in his time of spiritual maturity was firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened (Dt. 20:1-4). When he commented about the commandments that God "added no more" (Dt. 5:22), he foresaw his people's tendency to add the Halacahs of their extra commandments... He could foresee the spiritual problems they would have in their hour by hour life, he appreciated how both their nature and their disobedience would be such a problem for them, and Moses foresaw that they would not cope well with it (ditto for our Lord Jesus). And he was fully aware, more so than they were, of the judgement this would bring. He not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration (Dt. 28:50-57). Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than what He had outlined in Lev. 26. Notice in passing that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. And in some ways, Moses became more demanding, whilst at the same time emphasizing grace and love. Thus under the Law, Israel were not to lend to their poor brother upon usury (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:37); but now Moses forbids them to do this to *any* Israelite (Dt. 23:19).

Having reminded them that if they were obedient, "there shall be no poor among you; for the Lord shall greatly bless thee", Moses goes on to comment that "the poor shall never cease out of the land"- and he gives the legislation cognisant of this (Dt. 15:4,11). Moses realized by the time of Deuteronomy that they wouldn't make it to the blessings which were potentially possible. Finely aware of the seriousness of our relationship with God, Moses pleads with Israel to " choose life" , not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of passages like Dt. 30:19. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Our Lord Jesus, with his knowledge of human nature, must have sensed that so many of those called into his new covenant would also turn away; He must have known that only a minority of Israel would choose the life which He offered. Yet like Moses He doubtless concentrated his thoughts on the minority who would respond. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without notes. It was no set piece address. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgment for sin, his knowledge of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved.

Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments. "Take heed" runs like a refrain throughout Moses' speech. He warns them, e.g., not to "take pity" on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (Dt. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail, and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way the Lord Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here. There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 ("will"), 14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8).

Moses adds a whole series of apparently 'minor' commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them in Deuteronomy not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God - because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world (Dt. 16:21). Likewise he commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently (Dt. 17:16). There are many other examples of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus.

Another theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Because Moses knew all this, he was pleading with Israel to "choose life", not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of passages like Dt. 30:19. I wonder if he wasn't screaming this to them, breaking down in the climax of logic and passion which resulted in that appeal. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Our Lord Jesus, with his knowledge of human nature, must have sensed that so many of those called into his new covenant would also turn away; he must have known that only a minority of Israel would choose the life which he offered. Yet like Moses he doubtless concentrated his thoughts on the minority who would respond. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without notes. It was no reading of a carefully prepared paper. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgement for sin, his knowledge

of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved. As he came to the end of his speech, he seems to have sensed they didn't grasp the reality of it all: "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Dt. 32:47); and thus his speech rises to a crescendo of intensity of pleading with them, after the pattern of the Lord.

Moses' Appeal To Israel

One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey (e.g. Dt. 10:21; 11:3-6), and especially the wonder of how he had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Just look up all the times "remember" occurs in Deuteronomy. He really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their *heart*. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our *mind*. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual *mind* and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy [thanks to Trevor Nicholls for that one]. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). The word "commandments" occurs 43 times in Deuteronomy, and only 19 times in the other three records; "remember" occurs 16 times compared to 8 times in the other three. And yet Moses commanded Israel specifically to engrave the law on tables of plaster, not stone, knowing that they would soon be washed away; thus he wished to teach Israel [or try to] the temporary nature of the Law (Dt. 27:4-8). Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing *love* of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh *thy* God" or "Yahweh *our* God" . He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak. The idea of 'cleaving' to God is also a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying* God. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level

of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" God's words. "Hear, O Israel" must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "Hear, O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And again, a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

Despite omitting some of the Law's commands in his speech, there are other commands which Moses really emphasises and repeats within his speech; e.g. the need to destroy idols and false teachers, and to provide cities of refuge to cater for the sins they would commit without intending to (Dt. 7:5; 12:3, 23-25; 13:6-14 = 17:2-7). This surely reflects our Lord's attitude to us; it is his desire that we recognise our sinfulness, our likelihood of failure, our need to separate from things which will lead us away from Him. And yet the Christian community is increasingly blind to this. Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the same spirit (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world.

The Enthusiasm Of Moses For Israel

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out—so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is *constantly* thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God *shall* bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Despite knowing their weakness and his own righteousness, Moses showed a marvellous softness and humility in that speech. When he reminds them how God wanted to reject them because of their idolatry with the golden calf, he does not mention how fervently he prayed for them, so fervently that God changed His expressed intention (Dt. 9:14); and note deeply, Moses *does not mention how he offered his physical and eternal life for their salvation*. That

fine, fine act and desire by Moses went unknown to Israel until the book of Exodus came into circulation. And likewise, the depth of Christ's love for us was unrecognised by us at the time. Moses had such humility in not telling in Israel in so many words how fervently he had loved them. The spiritual culture of the Lord is even greater.

The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves- even though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (Dt. 20:14; 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (Dt. 17:17) and divorce (24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). And Dt. 16:2 seems to imply that now, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7).

Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the " blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: " Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he *hath* given thee" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in his feelings for us, we trust.

And yet for all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus 26 it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst Dt. 28:58 says that obedience results in fearing the fearful Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his God and His Name*. This is blessing enough. Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end.

Notes

(1) Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways!

(2) See *Moses and Jesus* and *Moses in the Gospel of John*.

4-3-2 The Song Of Moses

In those hours as Moses stood there saying those words of Deuteronomy, and then as he sung that song of Moses to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. His voice would have been that of a young man, and yet with all the passion of meaning of his 120 years. And

then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, with that same wondrous voice. " Yea, he *loved* the people" . And then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. " That selfsame day" Moses spoke Deuteronomy, God commanded him: " Get thee up into this mountain...and behold the land...and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people" (Dt. 32:50). Like the Lord Jesus, he received a commandment to die (Jn. 10:18; 14:31), and yet he presumably did not know how to consciously fulfil it according to his own actions. He climbed the mountain alone, that same day he spoke Deuteronomy. Presumably he spoke Deuteronomy in the morning, sung the song of Moses, and then " that selfsame day" died. It would have taken him time to climb the mountain, to be met at the top by the Angel, who then showed him the land, kissed him (see later) and buried him. Presumably he died late in the day, watching the sun setting over the promised land- perhaps at the same hour Jesus died.

The pathos of the scene is wondrous, the Song of Moses as it were can be heard still echoing. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see prefigured the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, admitting that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He would have reflected how at age 40 he was honest with himself, how he told the world who his real mother was (probably, tragically enough, after her death, sad that her son seemed to have rejected her for the pleasures of Egypt), how he had refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like you and me, with all a man's feelings, all a man's memories, all a man's humanity. I believe, although I can't prove it, that he wept all the way to the top, climbing farther and farther away from the people he loved, knowing that the majority simply didn't understand him and what he had suffered for them. And perhaps as he sung the song of Moses, he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the arguments with her, to the pain of the divorce, to the Ethiopian woman, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11).

The echoes of Deuteronomy in the Lord's goodbye speeches shouldn't be missed; for Moses at this time truly was a superb type of the Lord Jesus. Deuteronomy concludes with two songs of Moses, one addressed to the Father (Dt. 32), and the other to his people (Dt. 33). It is apparent that the Lord's final prayer in Jn. 17 is divisible into the same two divisions- prayer to the Father, and concern for His people. It has been observed that the prayer of Jn. 17 is also almost like a hymn- divided into seven strophes of eight lines each. It would appear to be John's equivalent to the record in Mk. 14:26 of a hymn being sung at the end of the Last Supper.

4-3-3 The Death Of Moses

How fitting that at the top of the mountain, he met that Angel again, who had loving prepared for the death of Moses. The same love, the same open-faced friendship would have been there. The Angel showed him the Kingdom, opening his eyes to see to the very boundaries of the land. It seems to me that in some sense the Lord Jesus had a vision of us in the Kingdom just before his death (Is. 53:10; Heb. 12:2; Ps. 22:17,20 cp. Eph. 5:30). Moses died "by the mouth of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley... but no man knoweth of his sepulchre" (Dt. 34:5,6 Heb.). "By the mouth of the Lord" can imply a kiss; as if the Angel kissed Moses, and this resulted in his death. Remember, the Angel was Moses *friend* (Ex. 33:11). It was a reversal of how the Angel created Adam and breathed into his nose the Spirit; now the Angel kisses Moses and takes it away. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Moses seems to have foreseen this when he said that "We bring our years to an end with a sigh", a final outbreathing (Ps. 90:9 RVmg.). And then the Angel built a sepulchre. Just picture that Angel perhaps digging, yes *digging* the grave, building the sepulchre of the rocks laying around in that cleft in the mountain ⁽¹⁾. In the context of Moses leading Israel, we are told: "As a beast goeth down into the valley (tired at the end of a day, led there to drink by a loving owner? Or the reference is perhaps to one of those noble animals which leave the herd to walk away and perish alone), the Spirit (Angel) of the Lord caused him to rest" (Is. 63:14). Remember how Moses was buried by the Angel in a valley in the mountain (Dt. 34:6). The Hebrew translated "rest" means both to physically lay down and to comfort. So we have the picture of the Angel comforting Moses with the hope of resurrection, kissing him goodnight as it were, and then laying him down in the grave. The softness of God at the death of Moses, the gentleness, prefigured above all the gentleness, in a sense, of the Father with His Son at the cross; and His gentleness with each of us in our time of dying. Let's remember this idea. For short of the second coming, we're all mortal. There's something wondrous about the death of Moses. It's as if God took Moses' funeral- and said in truth 'This is the best man I've yet known', as a man might say at the funeral of his best friend.

Through it all we sense the great love of Yahweh, manifest in that Angel, for His servant. And this all typifies the tenderness of God for Jesus in his time of dying. As we think of the Angel lowering the body of Moses, with his arms around and underneath him, it seems no accident that the last words of Moses spoke of this very thing: " There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency in the sky. *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee....Israel then shall dwell in safety alone (language of the future Kingdom, Ez. 29:26; 34:25): the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh...thine enemies shall be subdued unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" , i.e. their idols (Dt. 33:26-29). Surely these Moses' last words could not have been said without his voice cracking with emotion.

A few hours before the death of Moses, he had been telling Israel: " While I am yet alive with you this day (for a few more hours), ye have been rebellious against Yahweh; and how much more after my death?" (Dt. 31:27). Earlier that same day the Angel had told him: " Thou shalt *lie down* (mg.) with thy fathers (cp. the Angel lying him down in the grave)...and this people will *rise up* (i.e. immediately after his death), and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land" (Dt. 31:16). No wonder this was ringing in Moses' ears as he came to his death.

Yet he triumphed in the fact that a minority would not give way. *His very last words* were a confident exaltation that ultimately Israel would overcome their temptations, the influence and idols of the surrounding world. But he knew that the majority of them would spiritually fall because of these things. Therefore he was looking forward to the minority in Israel who would gloriously overcome, who would come to the Kingdom, the land of corn and wine, when the heavens would drop dew. This is clearly the language of Ps. 72 and Isaiah about the future Kingdom. Moses met death with the vision of the faithful minority in the Kingdom, in the promised land, having overcome all their besetting temptations. And the Lord Jesus died with exactly that same vision (Ps. 22:22-31; 69: 30-36).

What an end. Out of weakness, such weakness, he was made strong. His temperamental faith, with its flashes of devotion, turned into a solid rock, a real ongoing relationship with a loving Father. *Every one* of his human relationships had failed: with his natural brother and sister, with his wife, with his mother, with his adopted mother, with his people. But finally that lonely man found his rest in Yahweh, Israel's God, he came to know Him as his friend and saviour. No wonder he is held up, by way of allusion throughout the New Testament, as both our example and a superb type of our Lord Jesus. Israel mourned for Moses, but it is emphasized that their weeping came to an end (Dt. 34:8). This is one of the most tragic things about the whole record of the death of Moses. They rose up, and forgot his love (Dt. 31:16,27). And what of us?

Notes

(1) An alternative reconstruction of the death of Moses is possible. Rabbinical tradition says that " he buried him" (Dt. 34:6) is reflexive; it means that Moses buried himself. For confirmation of this, see S.R.Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. 5 p.685 (New York: Judaica Press, 1971). It is the same Hebrew construction as in Lev. 22:16 and Num. 6:13. In this case, the description of Christ as 'making his own grave' (Is. 53:9) could be read as an allusion to the death of Moses. Therefore the pattern of events was perhaps something like this: The Angel showed Moses the land; Moses, in the presence of the Angel, dug his own grave and lowered himself into it, as a conscious act of the will, in obedience to God's command (as the prototype of the Lord Jesus). The prophesy that Moses would *lie down* in death takes on a literal sense in this case (Dt. 31:16). Then the Angel kissed him, and he died. The Angel then built up the sepulchre over his body. Personally I feel this was what happened, but I am cautious to strongly push ideas which rely on a fine point of Hebrew grammar.

4.4 Moses As A Type Of Christ

By the time he uttered Deuteronomy, Moses would probably have been the oldest person any of the congregation had ever known. Many of the earlier generation had been cut down in the wilderness. He was nearly twice the age of Joshua. He had dominated their lives from birth, had stuck with them, with their fathers and even grandparents. Just as the Lord Jesus is to be the central figure in the new Israel. Moses was also a representative of his people, just as the Lord Jesus is in a sense 'Israel'- the suffering servant refers to both Israel and their Messiah. Moses was "adopted by an imperial parent, punished for his rashness, sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness, forgiven, restored, hand-selected for an impossible task, accompanied by the overwhelming presence of God at every step...", just as his beloved people. In the same way as Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, so Christ was of the new. Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Dt. 18:18). Moses was the shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom. It was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan: " The Lord said unto (Moses), Arise (cp. Christ's resurrection), take thy journey before the people (as Christ, the good shepherd, goes *before* the flock, Jn. 10:3), *that* they may go in and possess the land" (Dt. 10:11). As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the

Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

It is possible that Moses appreciated that he was a type of Christ the future Messiah; he considered "the reproach of Christ" enough to motivate him to reject the attractions of Egypt (Heb. 11:26); he knew he was sharing the sufferings of the future, ultimate saviour, and the wonder of that alone was enough to motivate him to leave the attractions of this world- even the possibility of being the next Pharaoh, the most powerful man on earth. The similarities between Jesus and Moses are too many to sensibly tabulate. There is ample opportunity to enter deeply into the attitude of Moses towards Israel, and it is this which perhaps most valuably deepens our appreciation of the love of Christ for us, and of our own liability to failure after the pattern of Israel.

The Rejection Of Moses

Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews "thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses...Because ye believed me not...ye shall not bring the congregation into the land...and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom..." . Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

It is simply fantastic that Moses could love those people so intensely, despite their aggression and indifference towards him. He was prepared to give his place in the Kingdom so that they might enter; he *prayed* God to accept his offer. He knew that atonement could only be by sacrifice of blood (Lev. 17:11); and yet he climbed the Mount with the intent of making atonement himself for Israel's sin (Ex. 32:30); he intended to give his life for them. And he didn't make such a promise in hot blood, as some men might. He made the statement, and

then made the long climb to the top of the mount. And during that climb, it seems he came to an even higher spiritual level; he was prepared not only to offer his physical life, but also his place in the Kingdom (Ex. 32:32 cp. Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12). Now although hopefully we are not rejecting Christ as they did, the fact still stands that the love of Moses for Israel typifies the love of Christ towards us. The degree, the extent of Moses' love, is but a dim foretaste of the *degree* of the love of Christ for us. Now in this is something wonderful, something we really need to go away and meditate about. And the wonder of it all is that Israel did not realize the extent of Moses' love at the time. At the end of his life he recounts how God has threatened to destroy the people, and then "I turned and came down from the mount" (Dt. 9:15). He doesn't record his 40 days of pleading with the Father, and how he turned down the offer of having himself made into a great nation. In this we see tremendous spiritual culture, pointing forward to the Lord's own self-perception of His sacrifice.

The loneliness of Moses as a type of Christ in showing this kind of love must surely represent that of our Lord. They went to a height which was generally beyond the appreciation of the men among whom they lived. The Spirit seems to highlight the loneliness of Moses by saying that at the same time as Moses *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Israel *refused* him (the same Greek word is used; Heb. 11:24; Acts 7:35). He was rejected by both the world and God's people: for 40 long years. As Israel envied Moses for spiritual reasons (Ps. 106:16; Acts 7:9), so they did Christ (Mt. 27:18), after the pattern of the brothers' spiritual envy of Joseph (Gen. 37:11). Spiritual envy leading to persecution is quite a common feature in Biblical history (Job, Jeremiah, Paul...). And it isn't absent from the Christian experience either.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). This latter verse is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt. This same illogicality is seen in us if we refuse baptism, preferring to stay in the world of slavery, or later when we chose the world as opposed to Christ. We deny, we refuse, we reject, the Lord who bought us by going back to the world from which he redeemed us. The illogicality of going back to the world is brought out by the illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses. Israel rejected Moses because it was easier to stay where they were. Such is the strength of conservatism in human nature; such is our innate weakness of will and resolve. They rejected the idea of leaving Egypt because they thought it was better than it was, they failed to face up to how much they were suffering (Num. 11:5). And our apathy in responding to Christ's redemptive plan for us is rooted in the same problem; we fail to appreciate the seriousness of sin, the extent to which we are in slavery to sin- even though the evidence for this is all around us.

" The same did God send..."

Stephen in Acts 7 brings out the sheer grace of God in redeeming Israel. Although Israel rejected Moses as their ruler and deliverer, " the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a

deliverer" (Acts 7:35). They didn't want to be saved from Egypt through Moses, and yet God did save them from Egypt through Moses. Israel at that time were exactly like us; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, we were redeemed in prospect from a world we didn't want to leave. We were saved- and are saved- almost in spite of ourselves. That we were predestined to such great salvation is one of redemption's finest mysteries.

And so God sent Moses to be their saviour, pointing forward to His sending of the Lord Jesus to redeem us. Moses came to Israel and " shewed (Greek '*optomai*') himself" to them (Acts 7:26). Yet '*optomai*' really means to gaze at, to watch a spectacle. He came to his people, and gazed at them as they fought among themselves, spiritually and emotionally destroyed by the oppression of Egypt. He invited them to likewise gaze upon him as their saviour. This surely prefigures our Lord's consideration of our sinful state. As he grew up in Nazareth he would have thought on this a lot. As Moses " looked on their burdens" at age 40 (Ex. 2:11), so at the start of his ministry, our Lord assessed the weight of ours. His concern for our burdens in Mt. 11:30; 23:4 is perhaps a conscious allusion back to Moses' awareness of Israel's burdens, and his desire to deliver them, even though it cost him all that he had in this world.

Moses fought with the temptation to just observe from a distance, but then he came out into the open, declaring that he was a Hebrew, rejecting his kind Egyptian foster mother, openly declaring that he was not really her son, as both she and he had claimed for 40 years. He would have borne the shame of all this, " the reproach of Christ" (Heb. 11:26). But he was not ashamed to call Israel his brethren, as Christ is not ashamed of us (Heb. 2:11- one of many allusions to Moses in Hebrews). All this suggests that like Moses, our Lord came to a point where he " came down" from obscurity to begin his work of deliverance. The references to 'coming down' in John's Gospel allude to this [\(1\)](#). " When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens...when he *was full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren...by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He *saw and knew* their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

And so Moses as a type of Christ came to his brethren, and saw one of them being beaten by an Egyptian. Moses " looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian" (Ex. 2:11,12). This little incident is typical of how Christ was to destroy the devil, the power of sin, on the cross. The common translation of this passage can give them impression that Moses was very nervous. Yet it does not say that when he saw no man *was looking* he slew the Egyptian. There was at least one man looking- the suffering Israelite. And there must have been others looking for news to get round that Moses had killed the Egyptian. So I would suggest that Moses saw the Israelite suffering, and looked round in wonder to see if any other Israelite was going to go to his rescue. Because he saw there was no man, he himself got involved. This is an eloquent essay in the humility of Moses and the Lord he typified.

This is exactly the same picture which we find in Is. 59:16 concerning Christ's decision to achieve our redemption: " He saw that there was no man (quoting the words of Ex. 2:11), and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation" (God saved

Israel from Egypt by the *arm* of Moses, manifesting His arm: Ex. 6:6; 15:16; Dt. 4:34; Is. 63:12). Is. 63:4-6 also contain allusions to Moses and the exodus (the rest of the chapter speaks explicitly about this): " The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year (time) of my redeemed (the one I will redeem) is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation" . The implication of these passages is that he was surprised, he " wondered" , that there was no one else to save Israel. He looked round for someone else to do it, but he found none- exactly after the pattern of Moses. This is not only an eloquent essay in our Lord's humanity, and the monstrosity of the 'trinity'; it indicates the true humility which he manifested in his work of redemption.

Yet Israel rejected Moses as their deliverer, they failed to see in that dead Egyptian the ability of Moses to save them completely from the life of slavery. And so Moses fled away from them, he came to Gentile, pagan Midian, and rescued a Gentile woman from the persecution of men, married her, and started a new life in the wilderness- to return many years later in the power of the Holy Spirit and redeem Israel when they were in truly desperate straits. All this naturally points ahead to the work of Jesus after Israel failed to respond to his work on the cross. The word used to describe Moses rescuing his future wife from the shepherds is the same used concerning God rescuing Israel from Egypt (Ex. 2:19; 18:10). Thus Moses was manifesting the redemptive work of God when he saved his wife. In full view of Israel (as Moses killed the Egyptian, according to our reconstruction above), Christ openly shewed his ability to destroy the power of sin, on account of which we lived in fear of death, " all (our) lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15)- clear reference back to Israel in Egypt. The passage in Hebrews 2 says that Christ can deliver us from such bondage because he is our representative, our brother, of our nature, not ashamed of his connection with us (2:11). Reasoning back from this, we can see that Moses' ability to redeem Israel from Egypt, his appropriacy for the task, was because he had openly declared that he was one of them. Yet the wonder of that was lost on them. And if we are not careful, the wonder of the fact that Christ had our nature, that he was our representative and is *therefore* mighty to save, can be lost on us too. The thrill of these first principles should ever remain with us.

Moses As Mediator

Israel were certainly representative of us. The *degree* of love shown by Moses to Israel is only a shadow of the degree, the kind of love shown by Christ to us, who hopefully are not rejecting him as Israel did. The power of this point just has to be reflected upon. That Moses could love Israel, to the extent of being willing to give his life and salvation for them, is a fine, fine type of the devotion of Christ. There is another oft emphasised aspect of Moses' love for Israel: the power of his mediation for them. We are told that God " hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instil a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel. But the fact is that God was willing to hearken to Moses as he prayed so, so earnestly, He was willing to change His expressed purpose in respect to destroying Israel (perhaps Ps. 90 is the transcript of this prayer- v.3 in Hebrew asks

God not to destroy the children of men, and to repent concerning His servants in vv. 13-17. In Dt. 16:15 Moses sounds as if Ps. 90:17 has been answered). It should also be noted that Moses as a type of Christ was not the High Priest. He mediated for Israel on a voluntary basis; not because he was under any duty to offer up their prayers. Indeed, they didn't make any prayers for him to offer up. He pleaded with God for them on his own initiative, rather than being asked by them to do so. And this is the basis of Christ's mediation for us; he pleads for us even when we know not what to pray for, even when we don't realize the need to beseech the Father. Moses' mediation, not so much Aaron's offerings, are the prototype which the New Testament uses to explain the Lord's present work. In the Apocryphal Assumption of Moses (1:14), Moses is made to say of God: " He designed and devised me and he prepared me before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator" . These words are alluded to in a number of NT passages. Clearly we are intended to see Moses' mediation as typical of the Lord's. His freewill mediation was the basis of Israel's salvation: " By a prophet (Moses: Dt. 18:18), the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (Hos. 12:13). This last clause may be a hint that Moses prayed for the gift of life-preserving manna, and thus sustained Israel, all unbeknown to them. Likewise the intensity of his prayers and the supremacy of his willingness to sacrifice himself for them was tragically unknown to them at the time. It's almost sad that these things have to be typical of the Lord's preservation and redemption of us his thick-skinned and unknowing people.

When we sin, the sentence of death is passed again and again upon us. Tragically, we sense that our forgiveness through Christ is almost effortlessly achieved by Him, benignly rubber stamped by a God who is eager to overlook sin. This is not the case. The intensity of Moses' pleadings for Israel, the grievousness of their sins, points forward to the work of the Lord Jesus for us on our wilderness journey to the Kingdom. Rom. 8::26,27 allows us to enter a little into our Lord's heavenly agony for us: " the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us (the language of Moses interceding for Israel) with groanings which cannot be uttered" . And even more wondrously, we are probably unaware of all Christ's prayers for us, as Israel were far from completely aware of the passionate dialogues between Moses and God on their behalf. They just got on with their lives at the foot of the mountain, occasionally jerked into a repentant frame of mind, assuming Moses would sort it all out up there in the mountain, full of their petty murmurings and wistful thoughts of Egypt. What tragic similarity with much of our lives. Can't we learn from them? Surely we must.

Moses As An Agent Of Grace

Moses, like the Lord, was an agent of grace. Israel no longer knew the Name of the God of their fathers- and the same passage in Exodus states that Pharaoh likewise didn't know the Name of Yahweh. Ezekiel 20 makes it clear that the Israelites worshipped the gods of Egypt and even took them with them through the Red Sea. Therefore God's saving of His people out of Egypt was an act of pure grace. It wasn't because they were righteous, they had forgotten Him. And likewise, our calling out of the world, our exodus from it through baptism, is a result of the calling / election of grace.

The Farewell Discourse

The lives of both Moses and the Lord ended with a farewell discourse and prayer. Not only do the words of the Lord consciously allude to Moses' words in Deuteronomy, but John's comments do likewise. John's comment that "Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world..." (Jn. 13:1) is without any doubt referring to the well known [at the time he was writing]

Jerusalem Targum on Dt. 32: "And when the last end of Moses the prophet was at hand, that he should be gathered from the world...". Consider the following obvious allusions of the Lord Jesus to Moses' final words:

- "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16.
- "Let not your heart be troubled... neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:1,27) repeats Moses' final encouragement to Israel "fear not, neither be dismayed" (Dt. 31:8; 1:21,29; 7:18).
- "I go to prepare a place for you" = the idea of Moses and the Angel bringing Israel "into the place which I have prepared" (Ex. 23:30).
- "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world" (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel "out of all peoples" (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).
- The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.
- The Lord told the Father that He had given the disciples His words, "and they have received them" (Jn. 17:8). This is evident allusion to the editorial comment in Dt. 33:3 about how all Israel received God's words through Moses. Likewise "I manifested thy name... they have kept thy word" (Jn. 17:6,26) = "I will proclaim the name of the Lord... they have observed thy word" (Dt. 32:3; 33:9). One marvels at the way the Lord's mind linked together so much Scripture in the artless, seamless way in which He did.
- "Holy Father... righteous Father" (Jn. 17:11,25) was a form of address which the Lord had in a sense lifted from Moses when he addresses God as "righteous and holy" (Dt. 32:4 LXX).

There are many other references in the Upper Room discourse to Moses- without doubt, Moses was very much in the Lord's mind as He faced His end. Consider at your leisure how Jn. 14:1 = Ex. 14:31; Jn. 14:11 = Ex. 14:8. When the Lord speaks in the Upper Room of manifesting the Father and Himself unto the disciples (Jn. 14:21,22), he is alluding to the way that Moses asked God to "manifest thyself unto me" (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The Lord's allusion makes Himself out to be God's representatives, and all those who believe in Him to be as Moses, receiving the vision of God's glory. Note that it was that very experience above all others which marks off Moses in Rabbinic writings as supreme and beyond all human equal. And yet the Lord is teaching that that very experience of Moses is to be shared *to an even higher degree* by all His followers. It would've taken real faith and spiritual ambition for those immature men who listened to the Lord that evening to really believe it... And the same difficult call comes to us too.

Moses: Representative And Saviour

It is a fundamental, if neglected, doctrine that Christ was our representative. This really ought to be a source of comfort to us, as we sense the involvement of the Son of God in our lives, one who can truly empathise (rather than just sympathise) with our spiritual struggle. This is so clearly taught by the typology of Moses as a type of Christ. Although he spoke to God as a friend, with an open-faced relationship, he still took upon himself the sin of Israel, he felt as condemned as they felt (Ex. 34:9 cp. 33:11); when he pleaded for God's sentence on him to be lifted, he pleaded for the same sentence on Israel to be lifted too (Ps. 90:8). When Yahweh met Moses, it was as if He met with Israel (Ex. 3:18). God promised to go with Moses, but Moses re-quotes this as God going with "us" (Ex. 33:14-16). This is how inextricably linked were Moses and his people, even in their condemnation. And so it is, thankfully, with us and the Lord. Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex.2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should. Moses 'struck' the Egyptian who was persecuting the Hebrew just as God would strike Egypt (Ex. 2:11 cp. Ex. 12:12,13,29 etc.). And Moses helps and delivers (Ex. 2:17,19) the daughters of Jethro, just as God would help and deliver Israel (Ex. 12:27; 14:13,30; 15:2). Note that at that time when Moses first met Jethro's daughters at the well, Moses was in depression. His plans and vision rejected by his own people, fallen from riches to rags, homeless and alone... and yet in that low moment he was chosen to be a manifestation of God! And this is the wonder of how God rejoices to work with the broken. However, Moses' desire to save others, his concern for the oppressed and helpless, shines through- he seeks to save the slave beaten by his Egyptian master; the neighbour wronged by his Hebrew brother; the unknown women deprived at the well by male nomads (Ex. 2:11,13,17). In all this Moses was manifesting the concern and saving help of God. And when we do likewise, we show God's face to this world.

In line with this, we find Moses as a type of Christ also presented as representative of Israel, and therefore able to completely sympathise with them in their physical afflictions and spiritual weaknesses. Thus the Spirit says (in the context of presenting Moses as a type of Christ) that Moses was " *in* (not " *with* ") the ecclesia in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38), stressing the way in which he was in their midst rather than distanced from them. The commands which constituted the covenant were given to Moses personally (Neh. 1:7,8), insofar as he represented Israel. Thus there is a parallel drawn in Ps. 103:7: He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" . " After the tenor of these words have I made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27). In the context of describing Israel's deliverance from Egypt, they are said to have been delivered from "the basket" (Ps. 81:6 RV)- clearly associating them with Moses' deliverance. Is. 63:11 (Heb.) is even more explicit: " He remembered...*Moses his people*" . Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role on that last glorious day of life when he addressed Israel: " The Lord said unto *me*...I will deliver [Og} into *thy* hand...so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel (Ex. 18:5). Moses recalled how "the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have delivered up Sihon and his land before thee [you singular- i.e. Moses]; begin to possess it, that thou [you singular again!] mayest inherit his land". Yet Moses then comments that therefore God "delivered" Sihon "before *us*" (Dt. 31,33 RV). The land and victory that Moses personally could have had- for it was God's wish to destroy Israel and make of him a new nation- he shared with Israel. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity

between them by a play on words: "The LORD God of the Hebrews hath *sent me* [lit. 'let me go'] unto thee, saying, *Let my people go*". "Let go" translates the same Hebrew word as "sent me". Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be. Likewise, both the Lord Jesus and Israel are called "the elect" (Is. 42:1; 45:4); both are fulfilments of the servant songs in Isaiah. The days will be shortened for the elect's sake (Mk. 13:20); for the sake of *Christ's* intercession, as well as ours.

Israel are called "the body of Moses" in the same way as the church is the body of Christ (Jude 9; 1 Cor. 10:2). His very name, 'Moses', can mean both one who draws out, and also one who is drawn out ⁽²⁾. As Moses was drawn out of the Nile and saved, so he later drew Israel out of Egypt. He could exactly enter into their feelings when they emerged from the Red Sea, as Christ exactly knows ours after baptism- better than we appreciate ourselves. Moses was saved by being surrounded by water in an "ark" (Ex. 2:3)- the only other time this word is used is concerning Noah's ark, which is a type of our salvation through baptism. God even worked through Moses' weakness to make him even more representative of his people; as he drew back from the theophany of the burning bush through a bad conscience, so did Israel at the foot of Sinai; as they were excluded from the land for inattention to Yahweh's word, so was Moses. He was touched with the very feeling of their sinfulness. In a marvellous way, the Lord Jesus achieved the same, yet without sin; he really felt like a sinner in his death. As the firstborn, Moses should have been slain on Passover night (Ex. 13:15); but he made the Passover sacrifice for his own redemption, although Heb. 11:28 says that he did it for the sake of Israel's redemption. Likewise the Lord's almost incomprehensible victory over human nature was not motivated by a selfish desire for his redemption; he did it for himself, that it might be for us. And this is what strengthened him. And on a far lower level, our own salvation is surely worked out through the sacrifices we make for the sake of others' spirituality. The fact that Christ, as Moses, has gone along the same path to salvation really should be a comfort to us, it should lessen the distance which we feel between us and our Lord. Thus a study of typology and of the atonement is not barren; it really will bring us closer to the Lord Jesus if we do it in the right spirit.

Moses' persecution by Pharaoh enabled him to enter into the feelings of Israel in the slave camps; and as they fled from Pharaoh towards the Red Sea, Moses would have recalled his own flight from Pharaoh to Midian. The whole epistle to the Hebrews is shot through with allusions to Moses. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) is alluding to Dt. 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet *from among their brethren* like unto *thee* (Moses)". The brethren of Christ are here paralleled with Moses; as if Moses really is representative of not only natural Israel, but spiritual too- as well as Moses being a type of Christ. For this reason he is such a clear pattern for us, and we are invited so often to identify ourselves with him by copying his example ⁽³⁾. Moses was *made like* his brethren through his similar experiences, as Christ was progressively *made like* us by his life of temptation.

It can be shown that much of Moses' life, especially his Midian years, were lived in a spirit of semi-spirituality, aware of his responsibility to God, but being slack to rise up to what it really meant, being content, year after year, to live the life of a spiritual minimalist, ever making excuses for himself ⁽⁴⁾. Yet somehow God overruled this, as He did the fact that Moses sinned and was excluded from entering the land. The result was that Moses was able to enter exactly into the feelings of rejected, spiritually apathetic Israel in their 40 years wilderness wanderings. For 40 years he too had wandered in the same desert as a shepherd, with the same apathy. This points forward to how the Lord Jesus can enter into the feelings of

active sinners, whilst himself being sinless. This phenomenon is discussed more fully elsewhere ⁽⁵⁾.

So there is no doubt that Moses as a type of Christ was also representative of Israel to a very high degree. And yet we have also seen ⁽⁶⁾ that in no other Old Testament character was God so intensely manifest as in Moses. So the concepts of being God manifest and also being representative of a sinful Israel come together in Moses in a wonderful way. Ex. 3:18 is an example of this. The elders of Israel were to tell Pharaoh that " the Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us" . Yet Yahweh God of Israel had only met with Moses. Yet because he was representative of Israel and also because he himself manifested Yahweh God of Israel, the elders had met Yahweh when they met Moses. In this we see a superb prefigurement of the Lord Jesus. He was the supreme, faultless manifestation of God, and yet also the total, empathetic representative of sinful man.

Moses himself realised the extent to which God saw him as representative of Israel; thus he told Israel: " The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord" (Dt. 5:4,5). This is similar to Christ saying that because he had spoken God's words to us, we have seen God (Jn. 14:8). It was Moses who saw God face to face (Ex. 33:11), yet he knew he was so representative of Israel that in reality *they* had seen God face to face. All the honours and glory given to Moses were thereby given to Israel *if they identified themselves with him*. And ditto for us and the Lord Jesus.

Notes

(1) See *The 'Coming Down' Of Christ*.

(2) See Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed* p.102 (London: S.P.C.K., 1994).

(3) See *Moses And Us*.

(4) See *Moses In Weakness*.

(5) See " *My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*" .

(6) See *God Manifestation In Moses*.

4.5 Moses Not Entering The Land

Israel hated him, they thrust him from them (Acts 7:39); due to their provocation he failed to enter the land. He had done so much for them, yet they bitterly rejected him- " this Moses" , as they called him (Ex. 32:1,23 cp. Acts 7:35). But when God wanted to destroy them and make of Moses a great nation, he pleaded for them with such intensity that he achieved what few prayerful men have: a change (not just a delay in outworking) in God's categorically stated intention. And especially, consider that time when Israel had sinned with the golden calf. Moses said that he would climb that mighty mountain yet again, and " I will make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). He knew well enough that no atonement was possible without the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; and see the similarity with Phinehas making an atonement for Israel's forgiveness through the slaying of Zimri and Cozbi in Num. 25:8,13). And yet he hoped (" peradventure") that God would accept *him* as an atonement: "

I will make an atonement" . He intended to offer his own life as an atonement for them- for that people who hated him, who pushed him from them and in their hearts returned to Egypt. He climbed that mountain (nearly a day's work), and at the top he made an even finer and altogether higher offer to the Angel: " If thou wilt forgive their sin...blot me, *I pray thee* (notice the earnestness of his desire) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32) ⁽¹⁾. And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment. Omission of the name from God's book is a clear reference to a believer losing his part in God's Kingdom (Ex. 32:33; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 17:8; 21:27; 22:19). This was not an offer made in hot blood; after the hours of climbing the mountain, Moses had decided what he sorely wished to do: to offer his place in God's Kingdom, so that Israel might be forgiven one awful sin. This is just superb. To offer one's physical life is one thing; to offer one's eternal life is quite another, and this is what Moses' not entering the land amounted to. And he pleaded with God to accept his offer, just for the forgiveness of one sin, of a people who hated him and were evidently bent on fulfilling the lust of the flesh. If this is how much Moses loved sinful Israel, think how much more Christ loved them. And if that's the level of Christ's love for sinful Israel, consider (or try to) the level of Christ's love for us who at least *try* not to thrust Him from us, who wish, in our weakness, to follow Him to the end.

To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9: "...neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". To be blotted out of the book meant to not enter the land (surely Ezekiel is alluding to Moses' experience). If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience. God had just spoken of 'blotting out' Israel from before Him (Dt. 9:14), and making a nation of Moses; but now Moses is asking to share in their condemnation rather than experience salvation without them. This was the extent of his devotion. On the last day of his life, Moses reeled off the great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard*- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded; Moses didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him *for their sakes*" (Ps. 106:32).

In all this, Moses was typifying the death of the Lord. Is. 53:8 describes His cross as being "cut off [Strong: 'excluded'] from the land of the living" (s.w. 'the congregation'- of Israel), for the transgression of His people. This is undoubtedly reference to the self-sacrificial exclusion of Moses from the land, that Israel might enter. The Lord died the death of a sinner, He chose like Moses to suffer affliction with us, that we might be saved. The intense prayer of Moses for Israel's salvation inspired David in prayer (Ps. 25:11 = Ex. 32:30,31). And Paul

makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:

2 Tim. 2:24,25

Moses

“the servant of the Lord

A very common title of Moses

must not strive

As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)

but be gentle unto all

The spirit of Moses

apt to teach

As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12;
Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)

patient

As was Moses

in meekness

Moses was the meekest man
(Num. 12:3)

instructing those that oppose
themselves

at the time of Aaron and Miriam’s
self-opposing rebellion

if God *peradventure* will give
them repentance [i.e. forgiveness]”

“*Peradventure* I shall make an
atonement for your sin” (Ex.
32:30)- and he prayed 40 days and
nights for it.

And note too:

2:19 = Num. 16:5,26

2:20 = Num. 12:7

2:21 = Num. 16:37

2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3

2:26 = Num. 16:33

This is quite something. The height of Moses’ devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn’t just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half heartedly ask our God to ‘be with’ brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others.

Notes

(1) It is difficult to interpret the Hebraism here. Moses *may* have meant: 'If you bar them from the Kingdom, then take my part out of it too; I don't want to be there without them'. Considering how they had treated him, this likewise shows his great love for them. A lesser man would have reasoned that being without that rabble of apostate renegades was what he looked forward to in the Kingdom.

4.6 Moses In The Gospel Of John

The point has been made that internal evidence suggests that John's Gospel was written some time after the other three Gospels, and is written with the assumption that readers are familiar with them. The big problem in the first century was that people were unwilling to see the supremacy of the place of the Lord Jesus Christ compared to Moses. Of course, many Jews just could not accept that Jesus of Nazareth was anything to do with the promised Messiah. Others, including some of the early converts, evidently held the view that Jesus was the Messiah, but they failed to see that he was any more important than Moses or David. One of the themes of John's Gospel is the supremacy of Christ over Moses. The Spirit through John does this by both direct statement and indirect allusion, e.g. through framing the records of Christ's miracles in language and style which highlights their supremacy over the ministry of Moses. Once we appreciate this, we can gain more insight into the way in which Moses was a type of Christ, both by contrast and similarity; and thereby we can enter closer into the mind of both Moses and the Lord Jesus. The Jews were drawing a contrast between themselves as "Moses' disciples", and the disciples of Jesus (Jn. 9:28; 18:17,25); John's Gospel demonstrates that such a distinction is invalid. Those who followed Moses would follow Jesus, because the whole of the Law of Moses taught understanding about Jesus (Jn. 5:46).

John's Gospel

"The darkness comprehended it (the light of Christ) not... the (Jewish) world knew him not" (John 1:5,10)

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). Moses in John's Gospel is an opening theme.

"The word was made flesh...we beheld his (Christ's) glory...full of grace and truth" (1:14). "if thou wouldest believe,

Moses : Jesus contrast

Israel "understood not" the work of Moses (Acts 7:25)

"When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren...he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts 7:23,25). Therefore Moses in the court of Pharaoh = Jesus working in Nazareth until age 30. Was Moses's "surprise" at Israel's lack of response reflected in Christ (cp. Is. 50:2-7; 59:16)? Despite his own righteousness, did Christ think too highly of the potential spirituality of Israel (Lk. 13:9; 20:13 cp. his high regard of others' spirituality: Mt. 8:10; 11:11; 15:28)? If the Lord *respected* others so much- shouldn't we have deep *respect* for each other? The pain of Moses' rejection = Christ's; although he was rich, Moses had become poor for their sakes.

Israel had asked that "the word" be not spoken to them any more; only Moses saw God's glory. But we are being invited

thou shouldest see (like Moses) the glory of God" (John 11:40).

Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father" (John 14:8), and Jesus replies that He is the manifestation of the Father.

" The *Law* was given by Moses, but *grace* and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

" No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which *is* in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (1:18). John here makes clear allusion to Moses.

" The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the (Jewish) world" (John 1:29)

to be equal to Moses, seeing from the cleft in the rock the awesome majesty of the perfection of Christ's character; the full glory of God. But do we appreciate his righteousness? Paul likewise invites us to behold with unveiled face, as Moses did (2 Cor. 3:18 RV), and thereby, just from appreciating the glory of Christ's character, be changed into the same glory. Note too how in Rom. 11 we are each bidden "behold the goodness and severity of God"- a reference to Moses beholding all the goodness of Yahweh. We are in essence in his position right now (Ex. 33:19).

This is the language of Ex. 33:18 LXX, where Moses likewise asks God "show yourself to me". The answer was in the theophany on Sinai, with the Name of Yahweh declared, as full of grace and truth. This, according to Philip's allusion to it, is what we see in Jesus. And this is why Jn. 1 speaks of Jesus in terms of the theophany of Exodus, that in His personality the full glory of the Father dwelt.

Blessing from obedience to commands was replaced by salvation by pure grace in Christ.

This alludes to Moses being unable to see God, whereas Christ now is cuddled in the bosom of the Father- such closeness, such a soft image, even now in his heavenly glory! Christ declared God's character (alluding to the Angel declaring God's Name at the same time as Moses was unable to see God) in his perfect life and above all on the cross (Jn. 17:26).

Contrast with how Moses tried harder than any other man to gain forgiveness for Israel, even to the extent of offering his own salvation for them- only to be told that this was not possible; all he achieved was a deferment of their punishment.

" We have found him (Jesus) of whom Moses in the law...did write" (John 1:45)

" Jesus...manifested forth his glory" (John 2:11) through his miracles. His miracles therefore were a demonstration of the character (" glory") of God, not just to relieve human grief as he came across it. Therefore they are all capable of allegorical interpretation.

" What sign shewest thou unto us?" (John 2:18)

In John 3:3,5, the Lord speaks of how a man must be born again in order to *see* and *enter* the Kingdom. He parallels *seeing* the Kingdom with entering it.

" No man hath ascended up to heaven" except Jesus (John 3:13)

" Where I am, thither ye cannot come" (John 7:34) sounds like Moses ascending the Mount, leaving Israel behind him. Yet " Where I am" refers to Christ's unity with God; the heights of his relationship with God connect with the physical ascension of Moses into the mount to hear God's words.

They recognised that Moses foresaw *throughout* the Law that *all* its ordinances pointed forward to one man, Messiah.

Contrast how the glory of God was manifested to Moses, who peeped at it from the rock. Yet Jesus was the glory of God, higher than the Angel who actually manifested the glory.

Cynical Israel asked exactly the same of Moses, in effect; superficially, " the people believed" (Ex. 4:31) after they saw the signs. The hollowness of Israel's 'belief' in Moses was matched by the experience of Christ. And yet they still both loved Israel.

Moses *saw* the land of the Kingdom of God, but couldn't *enter* it. This is surely behind the Lord's words here. Given the many allusions to Moses in John's Gospel, I submit that the Lord was surely saying something about Moses' seeing of the land before he died (Num. 27:12). It's as if He felt that Moses' seeing the land meant that he would ultimately enter it. To be enabled to see the land, with 'born again' special eyesight, was therefore a guarantee that Moses would enter the Kingdom. And Is. 33:17 speaks of beholding the King in his beauty and seeing "the land that is very far off" [an obvious allusion to Moses seeing the land] as a picture of ultimate salvation.

Moses' ascents of the mountain were seen as representing an ascension to Heaven; but he had not ascended up to the " heavenly things" of which Christ spoke. Consider the spiritual loneliness of rising to heights no other man has reached, as far as Heaven is above earth. John the Baptist recognised this (Jn. 3:31).

" I will that they also...be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (17:24)

alludes to the 70 elders sharing Moses' experience in the Mount (Ex.24:70); it is as if Christ is saying that his disciples really can enter into his relationship with God, we can be where he was spiritually in his mortal life (see comments on 3:34 below).

" As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14)

It was the serpent which gave salvation to sin-stricken Israel, not Moses; and the *serpent* represented Christ in this case. Moses " lifted up" the serpent in the same way as the Jews " lifted up" Christ in crucifying him (Jn. 8:28). Moses drew attention to serpent and it's power to save, in the same way as his Law drew attention to how sin would be condemned in Christ as the means of our salvation. The connection between Moses " lifting up" Christ and Israel doing likewise is another indicator of how Moses was representative of Israel (cp. Christ).

" For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34)

This is Moses language- he was sent by God, and his words were God's words ⁽¹⁾. But Christ spoke *all* God's words (Jn. 15:15; 17:7,8,14 cp. 5:20), he had God's Spirit without limit, he completely revealed God, compared to the partial revelation through Moses. Christ had " all things" revealed to him, and those " all things" are now revealed unto us by the Spirit (Jn. 16:14,15; 1 Cor. 2:9-15; Eph. 1:3,8; Col. 2:2). Because of this, it is possible for us to reach the same level of knowledge of God which Christ had in his mortality. This alone should inspire us to more than do our daily readings. That God gave Christ " all things" was a sign of His love for him (Jn. 5:20); and so God granting us progressive understanding of those " all things" is a reflection of His love for us. Growing in knowledge is not just for the Bible study enthusiast!

" My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (John 7:16) alludes to Moses above all, whose words were those of God.

Christ at a well met the Samaritan woman, and had a highly spiritual conversation with her; he gave her " living water" , i.e. spring water, in return for her well water (John 4:7-10)

Surely this contrasts with Moses meeting his Gentile wife by a well; a relationship in which he gave her very little, and which was an indicator of a spiritual weak cycle in his life ⁽²⁾. The Samaritan

woman immediately recognised Jesus as Jewish (Jn.4:9). Zipporah thought that Moses was an Egyptian (Ex.2:19)- which is another comforting type of Christ's humanity.

The paralysed man had waited by the pool 38 years, waiting for someone to cure him. There was no cure in those 38 years- only in the word of Christ (John 5:5)

“The works...The Son can do nothing *of himself*” (Jn. 5:19)

In Jn. 5:19,20 we read that the Son does (*poieo*) what He sees the Father doing, and the Father shows Him (*deiknumi*) all (*panta*) that He does.

" The Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape (Gk. form, view). And ye have not his word abiding in you...I am come in my Father's Name, and ye receive me not...there is one that accuseth you, even Moses...for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me" (John 5:37-46)

The miracle of the loaves and fishes made men see the similarity between Christ and Moses, whom they perceived to have provided the manna (John 6:32). Therefore they thought that Jesus must be

Israel were actually in the wilderness for 38 years; the similarity implies Moses' leadership could not bring salvation, only the word of Christ ⁽³⁾.

“All these works...I have not done them of mine own mind” (Num. 16:28). This is referring to Ex. 25:9 LXX, where Moses makes (*poieo*) the Tabernacle according all (*panta*) that God shows him (*deiknuo*). The reference of Jn. 5:19,20 is therefore to the Lord working with His Father in the building up of us the tabernacle... and *all* things God planned for us were revealed to the Son even in His mortality. What great wealth of understanding was there within His mind, within those brain cells... and how tragic that the head and body that bore them was betrayed and ignored and spat upon and tortured by men...

Nearly all these statements were true of Moses, but untrue of the Jews. Yet there was one glaring contrast: Moses earnestly desired to see God's shape, to view Him, to completely understand Him. This was denied him- but not Jesus. The similarity and yet difference between Moses and Jesus is really brought out here. And again, Moses is shown to be representative of sinful Israel; as he lifted up the serpent, so they would lift up Christ; as he failed to see the Father's " shape" , so they did too.

But Jesus said that he was greater than Moses, because Moses' bread only gave them temporal life, whereas if a man ate of him, he would live for ever; his words would give spiritual life which was part of that " eternal life" of the Father

the prophet like Moses, of whom Moses wrote (John 6:14).

In this context, " the Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41)

"The prophet" (Jn. 7:40,52 RV) is clearly a reference to "the prophet" like Moses, i.e. Messiah. There are many other allusions by John's record to the Dt. 18:18 passage: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him". References to the Son only speaking what the Father commanded Him are to be found in Jn. 4:25; 8:28; 12:49⁽¹⁾.

(1) This theme especially is developed well in T.F. Glasson, *Moses In The Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM, 1963) p. 30.

"If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world" (Jn. 7:4) connects with the other references in John to the Lord 'hiding himself' (Jn. 8:59; 12:36).

(6:49,50). The Jews thought that the prophet like Moses of Dt.18:18 was a prophet equal or inferior to Moses. John's Gospel records how Christ was showing that the prophet would be greater than Moses. Martha understood that when she said that " the Christ...which should come into the world" (i.e. the prophet of Dt.18:18) was " the Son of God" , and therefore Jesus of Nazareth (11:27).

Israel continually " murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12).

The Jews thought that as Moses hid himself and then re-emerged from obscurity, so Messiah would. Rabbi Berekiah said: "As the first deliverer [Moses] was revealed, then hidden and afterwards appeared again, so will it also be with the last deliverer [Messiah]"⁽¹⁾.

John's record is clearly presenting the Lord as Moses in this sense.

(1) Quoted in J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea In Israel* (London: Macmillan, 1956) p. 17.

" Jesus went unto the mount of Olives...he came again into the temple, and all the people (i.e. the leaders and the crowd, see context) came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them" (John 8:1,2)

This is framed to recall Moses coming down from Sinai: " The Lord came (down) from Sinai (manifest in Moses)...yea, he (God) loved the people (in the fact that) all his saints (Israel) are in thy (Moses') hand (as we are in the hand of Christ, Jn. 10:28-30): and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words...the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel (i.e. both leaders and ordinary people) were gathered together (to Moses)" (Dt. 33:2-5).

"I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me" (Jn. 8:28).

"The Lord hath sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of myself" (Num. 16:28 LXX)

The good shepherd of John 10 enables the sheep to go out and come in.

Moses sought for a prophet / successor like unto him, who would lead out and bring in the sheep of Israel (Num. 27:17,21). The descriptions of the good shepherd not losing any sheep (Jn. 10:28; 17:12) perhaps allude to the well known Jewish stories about Moses being such a good shepherd that he never lost a sheep⁽¹⁾.

(1) L. Ginzberg, *Legends Of The Jews* has a section on 'Moses as faithful shepherd' (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1910) Vol. 2 pp. 300-316.

" I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11)

Moses was a shepherd for 40 years, and then for 40 years he put this into practice by leading Israel as God's shepherd for 40 years in the same wilderness (Num. 27:17; Ps. 80:1; Is. 63:11). As Moses was willing to sacrifice his eternal life for the salvation of the sheep of Israel (Ex.

" The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the (Jewish) world" (John 6:51). " The world" in John's Gospel is normally the Jewish world.

" Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11:51)

Many other passages teach that *primarily* Christ died for the salvation of Israel (e.g. Gal. 4:5); some Gentiles have been saved only insofar as we become spiritual Israel ⁽⁴⁾.

" Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews...(he) did hid himself from them...he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 11:54; 12:36,45).

" The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25).

32:30-32), so Christ gave his life for us. John's Gospel normally shows the supremacy of Christ over Moses. In this connection of them both being shepherds willing to die for the flock, Moses is not framed as being inferior to Christ- in that in his desire to die for Israel, he truly reached the fullness of the spirit of Christ. " The good shepherd" may well have been a Rabbinical title for Moses; Christ was saying " I am Moses, in his love for your salvation; not better than him, but exactly like him in this" . In a sense, Moses' prayer was heard, in that he was excluded from the land *for their sakes* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Ps. 106:33); they entered after his death. This was to symbolise how the spirit of his love for Israel was typical of Christ's for us. The Lord Jesus likewise died the death of a sinner; he was " forsaken" in the sense that God forsakes sinners, whilst as God's Son he was never forsaken by the Father.

The increasing distancing of Christ from Israel seems to mimic that of Moses. He spoke to them through a veil at all times, so that they did not appreciate the glory of God which shone from his face; they thereby failed to appreciate the closeness of his relationship with the Angel, whose glory was transferred to the face of Moses when they spoke face to face (2 Cor. 3:18-21; Ex. 33:20). If the Jews had spoken to Moses without the veil, it would have been as if they were talking directly to the Angel. But if we see or understand *Christ*, we see God- not just an Angel. We therefore simply *must* give time to understanding the character of Christ. Otherwise we can never know God. The time when Christ would shew his disciples plainly of the Father was when they received the Comforter. Through the ministry of the word ⁽⁵⁾, we too can see " plainly of the Father" , with unveiled face.

“Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him” (Jn. 12:37)

" If I go..I will come again...A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to my father" (John 14:3; 16:16)

“Let not your heart be troubled...I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1,2).

Jn. 14:16 promised the disciples another ‘Paraclete’ or comforter / intercessor, implying Jesus was the first Paraclete [as confirmed in 1 Jn. 2:1].

" Ye shall weep and lament, but the (Jewish) world shall rejoice" (John 16:20)

" The men which thou gavest me out of the (Jewish) world...they have kept thy word" (John 17:6)

This was the identical experience of Moses, described in just the same language (Num. 14:11).

This may refer to Moses going up and down the mountain, disappearing from Israel's sight, and then returning with the covenant- to find Israel worshipping the golden calf.

“Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them” (Dt. 1:41). Yet the contrast is with Moses, who fain would have gone ahead into the promised land to prepare the place, but was unable. Yet Moses was the foremost intercessor for Israel, and is actually called ‘the Paraclete’ in the Midrash on Ex. 12:29⁽¹⁾.

(1) Quoted in D. Daube, *The New Testament And Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956) p. 11.

Cp. Israel rejoicing in the works of their own hands (Acts 7:41), the golden calf, while Moses was absent- cp. Christ's absence in the grave, with the Jews rejoicing and the disciples lamenting. In another sense, the return of Moses from the mountain may look ahead to Christ's return from Heaven- to find the majority of the new Israel apostate, although thinking they are being especially obedient to Yahweh (Ex. 32:5). The peak of selfless love for Israel which Moses showed at this time therefore points forward to the zeal of Christ for our forgiveness and salvation at his return (Ex. 32:32). Moses at his finest hour thus typifies Christ at his return. And after the golden calf incident, Israel are encouraged to enter the Kingdom (Ex. 33:1)- as at the second coming.

Cp. the Levites being " given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they " observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the Levites was therefore that between Christ

and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness that at least a minority were faithful.

" I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me...I have declared unto them thy name" (John 17:8, 26)

As Moses gave all God's words to Israel on his return from the Mount; " every one shall receive of thy words" (Dt. 33:3). Moses " received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:38).

" I have proclaimed the name of the Lord" (Dt.32:3 LXX) was surely in Christ's mind; and those words are in the context of Moses' song, which roundly exposed Israel's future apostacy. The character, the fundamental personality of God, is declared through appreciating human weakness and apostacy. Christ's words of Jn.17:26 were likewise in the context of revealing apostacy and future weakness. Thus through recognition of sin we come to know God; this is the fundamental message of Ezekiel and other prophets. Through knowing our own sinfulness we know the righteousness of God, and vice versa. Thus properly beholding the righteousness of God as displayed on the cross ought to convict us of our sinfulness, as it did the people who saw it in real life (they " smote upon their breasts" in repentance, cp. Lk. 18:13).

" I pray not for the (Jewish) world, but for them (the disciples, cp. the Levites) which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9)

As the Levites were God's (Num. 3:12,13,45; 8:14). The Levites represent us (John 17:6 = Dt. 33:9); the relationship between Moses and the Levites represents that between Christ and us. Moses' thankfulness that they remained faithful during the golden calf crisis, that sense of being able to rely on them, will be reflected in the Lord's feelings toward the faithful.

" Sanctify them through (i.e. through obedience to) thy word" (John 17:17)

As the Levites were sanctified (1 Chron. 23:13 Heb.). The Levites were consecrated in God's eyes by their zeal (motivated by the word) to rid Israel of apostacy; this is what constituted them Yahweh's " holy (sanctified) one" (Dt. 33:8,9). Through his allusions to this, Christ was telling the disciples not to be

frightened to stand alone from the community they knew and respected ⁽⁶⁾. Resisting apostacy is therefore *part* of our sanctification. It cannot be ignored, or left to others.

“Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Jn. 17:24)

This a reference to the description of Moses as having been prepared in God’s plan from the beginning: “He prepared me [Moses] before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator of His covenant” (*Assumption of Moses* 1.14). Once we appreciate this and other such allusions to popular Jewish belief about Moses, then the passages which appear to speak of personal pre-existence are easier to understand. The Jews didn’t believe that Moses personally pre-existed, but rather that he was there in the plan / purpose of God, and with the major role in that purpose, from before creation. The Lord was applying those beliefs and that language to Himself, showing that He was greater than Moses. But by doing so, He wasn’t implying that He personally pre-existed.

Consider Num. 16:28 LXX: “Moses said, Hereby ye shall *know* that the Lord hath *sent me* to *do all these works*; for I have not done them *of myself*”. The ideas of *know*, *sent me*, *do these works*, *not of myself* are so frequent in John: Jn. 13:35; 8:28,42; 7:3,28; 5:30,36; 10:25,37; 14:10; 15:24; 17:4.

It has also been demonstrated by Pauline Clementson that there is “a remarkable correlation between the signs recorded in John, and the plagues Moses brought upon Egypt. There cannot be a complete match as the numbers are unequal, but the differing types of miraculous signs all find their counterpart in the plagues”. The purpose of all these allusions to the time of Moses' return from Sinai was surely to make the following point: As Moses disappeared into Sinai to attain the old covenant, so Christ died for three days to attain the new covenant. The majority of Israel, egged on by their high priest, turned to apostacy. On Moses' return, only the Levites were faithful; they sacrificed all their natural relationships in order to defend the Faith (Dt. 33:9). Likewise, the majority of Israel turned to apostacy in the first century, mixing the desires of the flesh with their keeping of the Law of Moses, just as they did with the golden calf. The 'little of both' syndrome is one of our most common enemies. Moses' return was like Christ's resurrection. The Levites represent the disciples who went on to become the teachers of Israel, a new priesthood. Those Levites represent us (1 Pet. 2:5), a minority who stand alone, both in the world and perhaps also among the covenant people, motivated by the word, yet like the disciples at the time of Christ's resurrection- rather unsure, struggling within their own faith, yet going on to be the teachers of the world.

Notes

(1) See *God Manifestation In Moses*.

(2) See *Moses In Weakness*.

(3) The symbolism of this incident is worked out further in H.A.Whittaker, *Studies in the Gospels*.

(4) This point is developed in " *Why hast thou forsaken me?*" .

(5) Proof that the ministry of the word in our times is parallel with the promised Comforter is provided in *Bible Basics* Digression 7.

(6) It seems the disciples respected the Jewish religious system far too much. Throughout the Gospels we see the Lord Jesus trying to educate them as to the extent of the apostasy which was there.

4.7 Moses And Amalek

I'd suggest that close study will lead to the conclusion that the events of Ex. 17 are the basis for Ps. 95. This is largely a Psalm of praise for what God did for Israel in the wilderness, whilst also commenting on the way they tragically put God to the test, and complained about His care for them. Now the words of Ps. 95:7- 11 are directly quoted in Heb.3:7- 11 concerning the experience of the new Israel. The simple conclusion from this is that we are really intended to see the events of Ex.17 as directly relevant for us.

Hard Road

So here were Israel, finding the way tough in Ex. 17, stumbling through the wilderness, like we are coughing and hacking our way through our 70 years or whatever. Verse 8: " And then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim" . Dt. 25:18 fills us in with some more details: " (Amalek) smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary" . So Israel were " faint and weary" , some of them had fallen by the wayside, others were being picked off almost daily by the bands of aggressive Amalekites. There are sure similarities with the weak state of our own community at the moment. As we read at the beginning of Ex. 17, Israel were living through the aftermath of their rebellion against Moses; they had been chronically thirsty, and perhaps their spiritual tiredness was matched by the mental and physical faintness of clinical dehydration. The effects of this can last quite some time after liquid is received. So they were at low ebb. In spiritual (if not physical) terms, this, I sense, is the position of many of us here this morning. Any brother or sister who is truly striving to imitate the spirit of Christ will go through this sense of exhaustion and spiritual depression at times, this sense that we must keep on going, but feeling ineffably tired, weary of the two steps backward and three forward which characterizes our spiritual growth.

Well, here were Israel, desperately summoning what physical and spiritual strength they had left to fight this battle with Amalek. It may be that this is the spirit of some here this morning. Surely each of us have an element of it in us. But there was a source of dynamism which led to their victory, a glorious victory, in the end. Moses began to pray, standing up, with his hands above his head. Let's look at the scene from a macro perspective. There were weary Israel, weary both spiritually and physically, fighting the strong, powerful Amalekites. The battle swayed to and fro, sometimes Amalek had the upper hand, sometimes Israel. This was

no walk over for either side (v.11). There was Moses, with his hands lifted above his head, praying intensely, " until the going down of the sun" (v.12). On account of the intensity of his prayers, Israel prevailed. Now I sense that you are all starting to see the point. You can guess where our thoughts will go. A righteous man, Moses the superb and detailed type of Christ, with his hands above his head, fellowshiping Israel's sufferings, battling with intense spiritual, mental and physical weariness, praying intensely, until sundown. Of course this is pointing forward to our Lord's crucifixion- on account of which our weariness can really be overcome, we really can find the victory over sin which we vain would have.

So now, in more positive spirit, let's eagerly get down to analyzing this incident from this viewpoint. Let's believe our prayer at the beginning of this meeting, that God will truly open our eyes to the spirit of Christ as it is in these Old Testament records. Because this is how we can more deeply enter into the mind of our Lord as he hung upon the cross.

Uplifted Hands

Uplifted hands are something consistently- and frequently associated with intense prayer, often for the forgiveness of God's people Israel (Lam. 2:19; 2 Chron. 6:12,13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 141:2; 1 Tim. 2:8). The only time we read of Moses lifting up his hands elsewhere is in Ex. 9:2#8,29, where his spreading out of his hands is made parallel with his intreating of God to lift the plagues on Egypt. In passing, let's not read those records as implying that Moses simply uttered a few words to God, and then each of the plagues was lifted. There was an element of real fervency in Moses' prayers- which may well be lacking in ours. This is surely an example of genuinely praying for our enemies (perhaps it is the Old Testament source of Christ's words in Mt.5:44?). It must be significant that uplifted hands is also related to a confirmation of God's covenant (see especially Ez. 20:5,6,15,23,28.42; 36:7; 47:14); for this is exactly what Christ did on the cross. And in a sense, this is what was happening in Ex.17; Israel had sinned, God had forgiven them, and was reconfirming the covenant through Moses (notice that one of the terms of the covenant was that God would save Israel from their enemies, e.g. Amalek).

John's Gospel has many references to Moses, as catalogued elsewhere. When John records the death of the Lord with two men either side of Him, he seems to do so with his mind on the record of Moses praying with Aaron and Hur on each side of him (Ex. 17:12). John's account in English reads: "They crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one" (Jn. 19:18). Karl Delitzsch translated the Greek New Testament into Hebrew, and the Hebrew phrase he chose to use here is identical with that in Ex. 17:12. Perhaps this explains why John alone of the Gospel writers doesn't mention that the two men on either side of the Lord were in fact criminals- he calls them "two others" (Jn. 19:18) and "...the legs of the first and of the other" (Jn. 19:32). Thus John may've chosen to highlight simply how there were two men on either side of the Lord, in order to bring out the connection with the Moses scene.

Genesis 49

I'd like us to think through Gen.49:22- 24. This speaks (v.22) of the descendant of Joseph as a fruitful vine (N.I.V.), with branches. The Lord Jesus seems to have quarried his description of himself as a vine with branches from this very passage (Jn.15:5). Verse 23 continues: " The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in

strength, and (note this bit) the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone (more Messianic allusions here) of Israel" . The upholding of Moses' arms is being unmistakably prophesied here; in a Messianic prophecy. The " God of Jacob" in Gen.48:15,16 refers to God manifest in Angels; Jacob there defines his God as " the Angel that redeemed me" . There are plenty of other reasons for thinking that " the God of Jacob" is Angelic language; but that's another story.⁽¹⁾ So Messiah's arms were to be upheld with Angelic strength. But we have seen that Christ's uplifted hands on the cross refer to the way in which he was intensely praying at the time. The hymnwriter put two and two together and came to the right conclusion: '...and Angels there / sustained the Son of God in prayer'. This was one of the ways in which " God was in Christ" in his sufferings; He gave him special Angelic encouragement to keep on praying, to keep on asking for help, without forcing Christ in any way to be righteous.

Surely in this we get some light on the mystery of the atonement; the mystery of the degree to which the Father helped the Son to overcome without in any way affecting Christ's freewill. It is perhaps significant that there were two men (Aaron and Hur) upholding Moses' arms, in enacted prophecy of how the Angels would strengthen Christ in prayer. Does this point forward to the two Angels especially associated with Christ, Gabriel and Michael? Physically, of course, it was the nails which kept Christ's hands uplifted above his head; yet are we to infer that the Angels even overruled that for a purpose?

Moses began to pray standing up, with his hands above his head, with the blazing midday sun beating down upon him (so is implied by the fact that he kept his hands steady until the sun went down. The battle would surely have lasted a few hours; perhaps eight, which was the length of time Christ hung on the cross?) But he just couldn't maintain this intensity of mental and spiritual concentration; he let down his hands. But from his high viewpoint, he could see (and hear?) the panic of Israel as they started to flee before their enemies. So he returned to his mental battle. No doubt when he let down his hands, he continued praying, but not so intensely. Yet he came to realize, perhaps after a few cycles of Israel starting to flee before Amalek, that his prayer was absolutely essential for Israel's survival and victory. But he knew that he just couldn't physically go on. His knees were weak, he was going to have to abandon his favourite prayer posture of standing (cp. the earlier records of his prayers in Exodus). His mind must have desperately raced as to how he could go on. At the back of his mind, he would have thrown his predicament upon the Lord. And a way was made. " They took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands" (v.12). Note how Moses did not waste his energy in getting the stone for himself; we get the picture of total mental devotion to Israel's cause, a man all consumed with his prayer, being humanly helped by lesser men. Israel's salvation depended on his totally voluntary intercession. The type is powerful. Peter reasons that Christ's attitude in prayer should be ours (1 Pet. 4:1). His prayers then, and ours now, were a struggle, after the pattern of Jacob.

Prophesied Prayers

The importance of Christ's prayers for us on the cross does not come out directly from the Gospel records. The fact Moses prayed until the sun went down perhaps indicates how Christ prayed constantly right up to his death. The way in which he constantly quotes the Psalms has lead some to suggest that he actually recited Psalms, e.g. 22, as he hung there. This suggestion appeals to me as being quite likely. But we must realize that those Psalms were fundamentally prayers of Messiah to God. This helps us build up a likely picture of Christ's mental state on the cross: merging prayer with Scripture quotation, desperately battling to

maintain the necessary intensity, rather than taking any kind of mental break (cp. Moses realizing that he mustn't drop his hands for a break). Yet the prayers of Christ on the cross, as prophesied in the Psalms, were repeatedly for his own personal salvation and resurrection. There is some mention of the salvation of " the great congregation" , but fundamentally those prayers are for himself. But it was only through his own salvation that ours was possible. This is in itself an indication of the peerless selflessness which Christ achieved as he hung there; to pray for his own salvation, 100% motivated by a desire for our salvation. Whenever we pray for ourselves rather than others, what is our motive? Are we praying (e.g.) for our own deliverance from danger or illness so that we can live and help others, to the glory of God? Or are we just exercising our own selfish, animal self-preservation instinct under a spiritual guise? Now that really is something to ponder. That is one of the many challenges of the cross.

It can be Biblically demonstrated that as Christ prayed on the cross, so we should arm ourselves with the same attitude of mind in prayer (cp. 1 Pet.4:1). Now I want to underline that. We have been entering into the intensity of Christ's praying for us on the cross, patterned on the intensity of Moses in Ex.17. And now we are going to see that this intensity really is an example for us. Let's have a look over at the Messianic Ps.69:13. In the context, these are the thoughts of Christ on the cross: " My prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time...in the truth of Thy salvation" . These words are alluded to in 2 Cor.6:2, where we are told to draw near to God (and encourage others to do so), because now is the accepted time and the day of salvation. Let's make the point even clearer. Please flick on to Heb.12:12: " Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" . Now if Scripture interprets Scripture at all, this just has to be an allusion back to feeble-kneed Moses, with his hanging-down hands being held up. And the apostle says: 'You are the one with feeble knees and hands, represented by Moses in Ex.17!' - when we have figured out that Moses is representing Christ praying for us on the cross. So the Spirit is teaching us that with the intensity that Moses prayed for Israel's (and therefore his own) salvation on that hill in Ex.17, with the intensity that Christ prayed on the hill of Golgotha - so we should be praying for each other's salvation, and our own. We must sustain each other in prayer, perhaps we can see it in terms of allowing the Angels to work through us to strengthen others in the ecclesia in their prayer life.

How often do we even speak to each other about prayer? Prayer ought to be a major feature of our spiritual life. Our spiritual life ought to be the main feature of our conversation the one with the other. But is it? I mean, what are we going to be talking about after the meeting this morning? Please, see the urgency of what I'm saying. Time is so short. And now is the accepted time, now is the day of God's grace. If we really believe this, we ought to at least be talking to one another about it! To spur us down this road, just consider the effort which Christ puts into his mediation for us. We've begun to enter into the intensity of his praying for us on the cross. Heb.5:7 comments on this that Christ prayed " with strong crying and tears" . These words are certainly to be connected with Rom.8:26, which speaks of Christ making intercession for us now with " groanings which cannot be uttered" . One might think from Heb.5:7 that the Lord Jesus made quite a noise whilst hanging on the cross. But Rom.8:26 says that his groaning is so intense that it cannot be audibly uttered; the physicality of sound would not do justice to the intensity of mental striving. No doubt the Lord Jesus was praying silently, or at best quietly, as he hung there. The point is that the same agonizing depth of prayer which the Lord achieved on the cross for us is what he now goes through as he intercedes for us with the Father. Brethren and sisters, what is our response? To fall asleep as we pray, all too late at night. To rush through our prayers before food, resume our worldly

conversations the moment we say (or hear) the 'Amen'.... ? Am I really exaggerating? I trust I am. But I'm exaggerating to make a point.

A Memorial

The battle which swayed to and fro between Israel and Amalek clearly points forward to our battle with the flesh. Moses/Jesus is away above us, earnestly praying for our victory. Yet in the same way as Israel had Joshua actually with them in the field (v.10), so Joshua- Jesus is not only some remote Heavenly helper. He is with us, leading us in the practical business of fighting this war. The personal effort which the Israelites had to make to follow Joshua is surely implied by the fact the victory was no walk-over. The weak among Israel were killed by the Amalekites (Dt.25:17,18); despite the incredible level of Christ's mediation for us, such is the power of sin and the apathy of human nature that we can still lose the battle. Thanks to Moses' hard mental work (cp. Christ's work on the cross), God issued a statement of intent after the battle: " I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek" (v.14). This points forward to God's purpose to obliterate the memory of the " former things" - i.e. Amalek, the things of our moral weakness (Rev.21:4); note how the " former things" in several Old Testament passages refer to the things of Israel's sad spiritual past). The forgetting of the former things therefore refers to the lack of awareness of the things with which we battled in this life. In the same way as God can 'forget' our sins, so one of the Kingdom joys will be the lack of memory of anything sinful. Such fullness of righteousness is hard for us to imagine in our present weakness. Yet the typology we have been studying lifts our minds into the possibility of at least considering these things.

The work of Moses led to the declaration that God will be perpetually at war with Amalek; in prospect, Amalek was destroyed when the sun went down. The same happened with our sinfulness on the cross. In a sense Amalek was destroyed for good, in another sense a long warfare was started; " the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" . Within our natures, as well as in our dealings with the world, we are experiencing this warfare. There is no respite from it. Yet we have this marvellous assurance: God is at war with sin, He is truly on our side in these struggles, these wrestlings with our very natures, which we all go through. This is the comfort, the massive, huge encouragement as we strive onwards. The spiritual aspect of the warfare is the only really important problem we have to face. Yet God is with us, He has openly declared His aggression against the very things which we struggle against, our selfishness, our impatience, our bitterness, our frustration...And so much did God want Israel to be aware of this attitude of His towards Amalek that He told them to write all this down " for a memorial " of the fact that the memorial of Amalek ultimately was going to be destroyed. There is a slight play on words here, which makes a powerful point. Israel were to ever remember that ultimately Amalek would no more be remembered. And this brings us to the way in which Christ's victory against the Amalek of sin has been memorialized in bread and wine, as a reminder that the day is coming when there will be no more remembrance even of the things against which we now spiritually struggle.⁽²⁾ So let's be motivated to keep up the struggle, to drive home and make good the victory which Christ achieved. You may recall that later, Saul failed to defeat the Amalekites completely; he failed to fully realize the extent of God's help in fighting Amalek/sin (1 Sam.15:3); whilst by contrast, David did completely destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam.30:1,17). So then, let's not let our hands down, let's fix our minds on the intensity which Moses and above all our Lord Jesus achieved and maintained in prayer, let's hold up each others' hands as we live out this life under the sun- until the sun goes down, as it were, and

the very concept and possibility of our personal sinfulness is finally forgotten, and death shall be swallowed up in Christ's victory.

Notes

(1) A story told in *Angels*, Chapter 1.

(2) That memorial was physically symbolized by the building of the altar called Jehovah- Nissi (v.15). This literally means 'Jehovah is my pole'; this is a word used indirectly in prophecies about the cross of Christ.

4-8-1 God Manifestation In Moses

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. The following points are proof enough of this:

- Yahweh said that He would give Joshua a charge; but Moses gave Joshua the charge (Dt. 31:14,23).

- Yahweh anointed the priests (Lev. 7:36) - but in practice Moses did.

- Israel were led by God's hand (Heb. 8:9; Is. 63:13); but in practice by Moses' hand (Ps. 77:20; Is. 63:12).

- Israel "chode with Moses...they strove with the Lord" (Num. 20:3,13) uses the same Hebrew word for both "chode" and "strove". To strive with Moses was to strive with the Lord- i.e. with the guardian Angel that was so closely associated with Moses? Num. 20:4 continues rather strangely with the Israelites addressing Moses in the plural: "The people chode with Moses, saying...Why have ye [you plural] brought up...". Could it be that even they recognized his partnership with God? Likewise Num. 21:5: "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye [plural] brought us up out of Egypt to die?".

- The pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: "They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)...so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you". Thus Moses' comments on God's words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 ("I" cp. "us"). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: "If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord...that I will give you the rain of your land...I will send grass in thy fields". The "I" here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

- God is His word (Jn. 1:2). Moses is likewise spoken of as if he is his word (Acts 15:21; 21:21; 26:22; 2 Cor. 3:18), so close was his association with it. The words and commands of Moses were those of God. "In the bush God spoke unto (Moses), saying, I am the God of Abraham...Isaac and Jacob" (Mk. 12:26; Mt. 22:31; Ex. 3:6). Yet Lk. 20:37 says that "that

the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when *he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham*” etc. Yet this was what God said of Himself.

- Likewise the Law was “a law...which I (Yahweh) have written” (Ex. 24:12). Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of *Moses* writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). “The book of the law of Moses” is parallel with “the book of the law of Yahweh” (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was “the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses” (2 Chron. 34:14). His personal blessing of the people was that of God (Dt. 33); and when he looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God’s inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Ex. 39:43). Yet Israel tragically failed to appreciate the degree to which God was manifest in the words of Moses, as they did with Christ. This is shown by them asking for Moses to speak with them, not God; they failed to realise that actually his voice was God’s voice. They failed to see that commandments given ‘second hand’ really are the voice of God (Ex. 20:19). Perhaps our appreciation of inspiration is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself? And there are many other ‘first principles’ we need to appreciate in practice.

- All the commands of Moses’ law were in order to teach Israel to appreciate and respect the character and name of Yahweh (Dt. 28:58) - therefore all these commands were a manifestation of the fundamental personality of the Father. Ditto for the words of Jesus, who was the prophet who would speak God’s word as Moses spoke it (Dt. 18:15-18). Because Jesus would speak God’s word as Moses did, the words of Moses should be studied as much as the words of Jesus - as Jesus himself said (Jn. 5:47). Yet do we *love* the Law of Moses as David did? Or do we not incline to be spiritually lazy, to be influenced by the (so called) New Testament Christianity of the apostate religious world around us? It is only by truly entering into the spirit of Moses’ words that we can really understand our Lord - he said this himself. And yet we would rather read Jesus’ words than those of Moses, because we can’t be bothered to make *the effort to understand the spirit of our Lord as it is revealed there*. And therefore we complain (if we are honest) of a lack of sense that we are having a real relationship with the Lord Jesus.

- Israel’s rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers “strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh” (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They *thrust* Moses *away* from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not *cast away* Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him.

- Because of the high degree of God manifestation in Moses, he was so severely punished for not sanctifying Yahweh in the eyes of Israel in his sin of smiting the rock. Israel provoking his spirit to sin at this time is spoken of in the context of the way in which they provoked God’s spirit (Ps. 106:7,29,33,43) - such was God’s manifestation in Moses even while he was sinning. And so God is manifest in sinful men like us too. Moses knew this, he knew his closeness to God through manifestation, and yet he yearned to see God physically, he struggled with his distance from God (Ex. 33:18,20). The spirit of Christ in the Psalms is similar. And for us too (although surely it is difficult to share this enthusiasm if we refuse to accept God’s existence in a physical, bodily form).

- Aaron asks: “Would it have been well pleasing in the sight of Yahweh?”, and then we read “And when Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in *his* sight” (Lev. 10:19,20 RV).

- We have seen that the time of Num. 10 and 11 was a spiritually low period for Moses(1). Consider Num. 10:30; 11:11-13,22,23. Yet in these very chapters there seems almost an emphasis on the fact that God was manifest in Moses: “Moses heard the people weep”; but they wept in the ears of Yahweh (Num. 11:10,18); “it displeased the Lord; and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased” (11:1,10) shows the connection between them; God has asked Moses to carry Israel “as a nursing father... unto the land” (11:12), although Yahweh was their father who would carry them to the land (Dt. 32:6; Hos. 11:1). That Yahweh is manifest in His servants *even in their times of weakness* is both comforting and sobering. It is because of this principle that an apostate Israel caused Yahweh’s Name *which they carried* to be mocked in the Gentile world (Ez. 20:39; 36:20; 39:7; 43:8). Yahweh did not take that Name away from them the moment they sinned. Having been baptized into the Name, our behaviour in the world, whether they appreciate it or not, is therefore a constant exhibition of the Name.

This manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. There’s a nice example of the mutuality between God and Moses in Ex. 33:1, where God says that *Moses* brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in Ex. 32:11, Moses says [as frequently] that *God* brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father. Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: “Who am I...?” to do the great things God required... and the answer was “I will be who I will be” (Ex. 3:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it.

4-8-2 The Hand Of God Is Our Hand

In Ex. 4:4 Moses is told to “put forth” his hand. It is the same word repeatedly translated “let go” in the context of God telling Pharaoh to let Israel go [e.g. Ex. 4:23]. “Caught” is the same Hebrew word frequently translated “harden” in the context of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart [e.g. Ex. 4:21]. As the snake hardened in Moses’ hand into a rod, so this was how God would deal with Pharaoh through Moses. Thus God is showing Moses that what Moses will do with *his* hand to the snake- a symbol of Egypt- so the hand of God will do, working through Moses’ hand. Thus Moses’ rod [s.w. Ex. 4:2, about his shepherd’s crook] was a symbol of Egypt and Pharaoh. But the throwing down of the shepherd’s rod surely also indicated that Moses was to cast down the shepherd’s life he had been living, and let God’s hand take hold of him, so that his hand became the hand of God. Moses would thus have perceived some sort of parallel between himself and Pharaoh; God was working in both their lives, and it would take as much courage to grab hold of his own serpent-like life, as it would to do battle with Egypt. Ex. 4:23,24 brings out the parallel between how God told Moses that He would slay the firstborn of Pharaoh; and then seeks to slay Moses and *his* firstborn. And we can see lessons for ourselves here, surely. We throw down our worldly lives, take hold of them in faith, and they are transformed into the rod of God through which He will work wonders. Moses had to perceive the serpent-like aspects of his life and grip them; just as the parallel second sign involved his hand becoming leprous, with all its associations with sin, and then being healed and made strong to be used as the hand of God. What all this shows is that God manifestation, our hand becoming the hand of God, God working through us to deliver His people, is predicated upon our own realization of sinfulness, and grasping it firmly.

Ultimately, the hand of Yahweh was revealed through the hand of Moses. Moses was “sent forth” by God to do the work (Ex. 3:12 and frequently); yet the same Hebrew word is used to describe how God ‘sent out’ [“stretched forth”] the hand of God to do it (Ex. 3:20). And Moses was taught this by being told to ‘stretch out’ [same Hebrew word] *his* hand (Ex. 4:4).

But Moses, for some moments at least, just didn’t want to do this. Hence God’s anger when Moses comments: “Send [the same word translated “let go” or “put forth” used about Moses being asked to “put forth” his hand in Ex. 4:4] by the hand of him whom thou wilt send” (Ex. 4:13). It was Moses’ hand that God had asked to be ‘put forth’ or ‘sent’. But Moses refuses to play a part in God manifestation. He wanted God to send forth another hand, the hand of God personally perhaps; although God had asked him to put forth *his* hand. We too tend to assume that God cannot manifest Himself through *us*; but we all tend to assume someone else will do the job, when it is *we* who are called to it. The rabbis hold that Moses is not being weak here, rather he is referring to the Messiah- the hand whom Moses knew God would one day send forth to save His people. He would then be saying: ‘No, I don’t want to do this, let the Christ do it’. The same thought is maybe found in Ex. 5:22, when Moses asks Yahweh: “Why is it that thou hast sent [s.w. “put forth” and “let go”] *me*?”- i.e., why don’t You use Messiah, the man of Your right hand? And this, subconsciously and unexpressed, is so often our view; He must do it, not me. I’m just a shepherd, God ought to leave me alone in the comfortable monotony of my working life. But He has called us to greater things, to realize as Moses finally did that *we*, you and me, are the ones through whom God truly will work in this world. The rod of Moses (“*thy* rod”) became the rod of God (Ex. 4:20); the shepherd’s crook, the symbol of an obscure workaday life, became transformed to the rod and arm of God Almighty.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt from all this that God was intensely manifest in Moses. The hand of God was manifested through the hand of Moses. Moses had many deep seated spiritual weakness, and also many traits which were not appropriate to leadership, and yet because of his willingness to participate in God’s desire to be manifest through him, he was able to be changed and used by God. We have elsewhere commented on these weaknesses and how they were slowly changed through the power of God manifestation in a willing man ⁽¹⁾.

Notes

(1) See *Moses In Weakness*.

Joshua: The Jagged Graph

4-9-1 Events In The Life Of Joshua

Moses was a hard act to follow. Joshua is someone I can identify with in that he had great potential which he never totally lived up to; although he was himself sound enough in his basic faith and, we can assume, will be in the Kingdom. Indeed, it seems he could have been a Messiah figure, leading Israel into the true Kingdom of God. This is developed at more

length in the section ‘Joshua: Potential Messiah?’. And yet Joshua did not give them “the rest” which it seems he could have. The following key events in the life of Joshua can be given a spirituality score out of, say, 10. They reveal a jagged graph, similar to that of all God’s children.

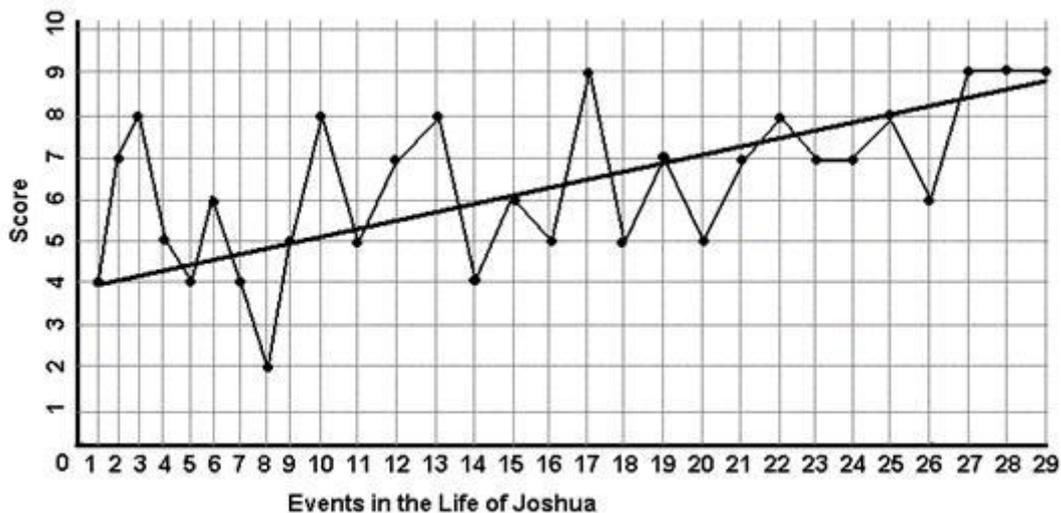
Event in the life of Joshua	Spirituality score out of 10
The repeated encouragement to be strong and of a good courage and not be fearful (Dt. 31:23; Josh. 1:6,7,8,18). What does this imply about Joshua?	4
4:3-8- strict obedience to Divine commands?	7
4:21 Quoting / alluding to Moses- as Joshua often does	8
5:13,14 Is this a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God’s will.	5
5:15 the command to remove his shoe from holy ground. This is evidently reminiscent of the command to Moses in a similar situation. Shouldn’t Joshua have perceived this, seeing his life was so clearly framed after that of Moses?	4
6:26 Was this unnecessarily extreme?	6
7:3-5 Shouldn’t Joshua have led them into battle in person (1:5); he did the second time they attacked Ai (8:15)	4
7:7,8- he lost faith in the promise of 1:5-7,9	2
7:10,11,13 He is being reminded not to just see himself as part of a community, but to remember his personal relationship with God, and not to have such a low self image	5

7:19 He correctly perceives that repentance is a giving of glory to God's Name	8
8:1 dismayed- he lost faith in 1:3,9	5
8:5,6 Fleeing before their enemies was perhaps a recognition of the truth of Dt. 28:25	7
8:26 Given the similarities with the battle against Amalek, were his arms held up in fervent prayer? This is a common association with upholden arms. Moses held his hand up, and Joshua led the army into battle, succeeding because Moses had his hands held up in prayer (Ex. 17:10). Now, Joshua is the one holding his hands up in prayer, whilst Israel are in battle. Lesson: We go through experiences which later repeat; and we are in the position of those who had before prayed for us, and are expected to replicate their examples.8:31,35- exact obedience	8
9:14-18 Too influenced by his 'committee'?	4
9:26 Integrity?	6
10:8 Lack of faith in 1:5?	5
10:12 Amazing faith in prayer; he commanded things to happen, so sure of the prayer being heard.	9
11:6,14- lack of faith in 1:9?	5
11:15,23 Strict obedience to commands	7
13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4 Much land was still not possessed; does 11:23 therefore imply that the land had been possessed only in the perceptions of Israel? How responsible was Joshua for this?	5
17:16-18 He saw their potential?	7

19:50 Spiritual ambition	8
21:43,44 The Lord gave them the land, i.e. potentially, but they failed to possess it. Is this therefore an implied criticism of Joshua, or of Israel?	7
22:2-4 This seems an over positive view of Israel, an exaggeration of their true spiritual position- cp. 23:4; 24:14,23. Or is this rooted in his love for them, not seeing iniquity in Jacob? Moses had told the Reubenites and Gadites that they could return to their possessions when "the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, and they also possess the land" (Dt. 3:20). But Joshua tells them to go to their possessions simply because their brethren were now at "rest" (Josh. 22:4). He significantly omits the proviso that their brethren must also possess the land- because much of the land wasn't possessed. Was this Joshua getting slack, thinking that the main thing was that people were living in peace, even though they weren't possessing the Kingdom? Or is it a loving concession to human weakness? Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.	7
23:7 Don't even make mention of their gods- alluded to in Eph. 5:3	8
23:9,14 Too positive? Saw things as achieved that hadn't been- Jud. 1:1. He seems to have tried to perceive the promises, which were conditional upon obedience, as having been fulfilled fully when they hadn't been. Solomon made the same mistake.	6
24:14 Compare his earlier over positive statements. Now it seems he came to a final sense of realism about sin, obedience and Israel's failure	9
24:15 As for me...we will serve. He realized that Israel, whom he had seen as so obedient, actually weren't serving God at all	9

24:19,23 A final realism as to the real nature of sin, and the ultimate demands which God makes upon human life in practice.

And plotting these as a graph gives the following:



A few things come out of these considerations:

4-9-2 Legalistic Obedience?

Joshua was very good at obedience to clear commandments (Josh. 4:10,17; 8:27; 10:40). But when he had to articulate his faith in God in unexpected situations, e.g. when the ambassadors from Gibeon arrived, or when the first attack on Ai failed, he seems to have performed poorly. Legalistic obedience is no use in those cases when principles need to be applied. Josh. 5:13,14 can be read as a rebuke of Joshua, wanting to boil everything down to black and white, wanting to see God as either personally for him or against him; when the essence is to seek to discern and do God's will. He very strictly adhered to God's commandments with legalistic obedience, e.g., about how to approach and deal with Jericho, or how to cross the flooded Jordan and build an altar; and time and again, we read in Joshua of how he strictly relayed and obeyed the Divine commandments given by Moses (Josh. 8:31,33,35; 11:12,15,20; 14:2,5; 17:4; 21:2,8). Yet as with any literalistic or legally minded person, it was hard for Joshua to apply the principles behind the laws to situations which weren't specifically addressed by Divine revelation, where legalistic obedience wasn't what was required.

4-9-3 Peer Pressure

Joshua like many modern Christians was very prone to being influenced by peer pressure and the views and expectations of others, especially in these situations. He told Israel they'd done a good job and driven out all the tribes- when they were still worshipping idols, and hadn't driven out all the tribes. Only in his deathbed speech did he face up to the reality of their sinfulness. Ex. 32:17,18 is another example of Joshua's genuine naivety- thinking that Israel were far stronger than they were. He mistook the sound of their idolatrous partying for the sound of a battle; and Moses almost rebukes him for his naivety. He allowed the leaders of Israel to lead him into wrong decisions about the initial attack on Ai, and also into being deceived by the Gibeonites. And yet as a younger man, he had boldly stood up to the peer pressure of the princes of Israel in faithfully declaring that Israel could and should go up into Canaan; when the other princes must have put huge pressure upon him to agree with them. He is described as maintaining "another spirit" to theirs (Num. 14:24). The resolution of youth seems to have been somewhat lost as he grew older.

In Ps. 1:1-3, David makes several allusions to Joshua. He speaks of how the man who meditates in God's word day and night will prosper in his ways; and he uses the very same Hebrew words as found in Josh. 1:8 in recounting God's charge to Joshua. But David's point is that the man who does these things will not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly"- he won't give in to peer pressure. The fact that Joshua was wrongly influenced by his peers in later life would indicate that he didn't keep the charge given to him.

Forgetting The Commission

Joshua had been charged to be strong, of good courage, not fearful nor be dismayed. Yet he had a tendency to forget those charges, the implications of his having been called by God for a purpose; and needed to be reminded of them as he forgot or lost faith in them. Perhaps this is why he is an otherwise surprising omission from the list of faithful men and women in Hebrews 11. And here of course is the challenge to us. We too have been given commissions and callings. Whether it be to raise a Godly family, to establish an ecclesia in a certain place, to overcome a specific vice...the obstacles will flee before us, every place where the soles of our feet rest, will be blessed...if we truly believe in God's purpose with us. Yet like Joshua, we usually fail to have a full faith in this. We get distracted by the views of others, peer pressure, worried by lack of resources, discouraged by setbacks; when it is belief in God's most basic initial promises to us that will overcome them. Joshua's fear is all the more reprehensible when we consider the testimony of Ps. 91. Here Moses speaks about Joshua, the one who dwelt in the secret place or tabernacle of God (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), and who therefore was miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness wanderings. Thousands of Joshua's generation died at his side from the various plagues which wasted out his generation during those wanderings; but they never came near him (Ps. 91:5-8). As a result of this, he was commanded by Moses to "not be afraid" (Ps. 91:5), perhaps Moses was thinking specifically about peer pressure, with the assurance that truly God would hear Joshua's prayers (Ps. 91:14,15). His amazing preservation during the wilderness years ought to have instilled a faith and lack of fearfulness within him; and yet the implication is that he did very often fall prey to fearfulness in later life. Just as with us, the circumstances of earlier life are controlled by the Father to give us faith with which to cope with later crises; but we don't always learn the lessons we are intended to.

4-9-4 Joshua Our Example

Joshua is consciously set up as our example:

- When Paul says that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the glory that shines from the face of the Lord Jesus, just as the glory to a lesser extent shone from the face of Moses (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). Yet the only person to behold Moses' unveiled glory was Joshua, who alone lived in the tabernacle where Moses received the glory (Ex. 33:11). And it was he who alone accompanied Moses up the mount to meet with God (Ex. 24:13). When Moses left Joshua and went out to the people, he veiled his face. But Joshua would have seen the glory shining off Moses' unveiled face.

- We may boldly say that we will *not* be fearful, as Joshua was, because God has addressed to *us* the very words which He did to Joshua: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5,6). In this especially, Joshua is our example. When Heb. 13:13 speaks of *us* going forth outside the camp, perhaps there is a reference to Joshua who dwelt with Moses outside the camp- thus making Joshua symbolic of us all.

Num. 27:20 LXX says that Moses put or gave of his glory upon Joshua- and this passage is alluded to by the Lord in Jn. 17:22: "The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them". Note that the Lord's prayer of John 17 is full of allusion to Moses, as detailed in http://www.carelinks.net/books/dh/bl/4-4Moses_As_A_Type_Of_Christ.htm. So the disciples, indeed all those for whom the Lord prayed in His prayer, are to see themselves as Joshua. Further, in the same context, the Lord washed the disciples' feet. This would've been understood by the disciples as an allusion to a well known Jewish legend that in Num. 27:15-23, Moses acted as a servant to Joshua by preparing a basin of water and washing Joshua's feet⁽¹⁾. And the LXX of Moses' final charge to Joshua in Dt. 31:7,8 ["fear not, neither be dismayed"] is quoted by the Lord to His disciples in Jn. 14:1,27.

Notes

(1) T.F. Glasson, *Moses In The Fourth Gospel* (London: SCM, 1963) p. 82.

4-10 Joshua: Potential Messiah?

Joshua's Potential

Joshua didn't give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); but he said he had (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15- that *he* would lead the people to "rest". The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but both Joshua and Israel would not. Dt. 1:38 states clearly that "Joshua...he shall cause Israel to inherit [s.w. possess]" the land. Yet by the end of Joshua's life, Israel were not inheriting the land in totality. He didn't live up to his potential. Note, in passing, that God's prophecy here was conditional, although no condition is actually stated at the time. God's opening commission to Joshua was that the people were to possess the whole land promised to Abraham, right up to the Euphrates (Josh. 1:4). But Joshua ended up drawing up the borders of the land far smaller than these; he didn't even seek to subdue the territory up to the Euphrates, even though God had promised him

potential success and even commanded him to do so. Joshua was to divide up the whole land promised to Abraham, amongst the tribes of Israel (Josh. 1:6). And yet in the extensive descriptions of Joshua dividing up the land, we don't find him dividing up that whole territory up to the Euphrates. He seems to have lacked that vision, and fallen into the mire of minimalism, just content with a utilitarian, small scale conquest, rather than seeing the bigger picture of the potential Kingdom which God wanted to give His people.

Joshua and Caleb were earlier characterized by the comment that they “wholly followed the Lord” when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would ‘go before’ them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives. As Joshua had been told to be strong good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25). As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6). Joshua had faithfully followed, and now he became the leader who was to be faithfully followed. Likewise, he led the Israelites in battle whilst Moses stood on the hill with arms uplifted in prayer for his success. And in capturing Ai, it was Joshua's turn to stand on a hill with arms uplifted [also in prayer?] whilst Israel fought. However, Joshua seems to have somehow gotten out of synch with the Angel when he meets Him in Josh. 5:14 and asks Him whether He is for or against Israel. We must walk in step with the Spirit / Angel in our lives; and yet no matter how much we've walked in step with Him, we can always allow pressure of circumstances to let us fall out of step with Him.

Joshua is repeatedly made parallel with Israel; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might “prosper” (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

This connection between Joshua and Israel is developed in Is. 59:21, which describes the new covenant which God will make with Israel in the Messianic Kingdom in terms evidently reminiscent of Joshua- as if the new covenant was made with him, thereby enabling him potentially to be part of a Messianic Kingdom even in his day:

“And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: my Spirit that is upon thee [“Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him” Dt. 34:9; Num. 27:18-23] , and my words which I have put in thy mouth [Dt. 18:18- God's words were put in Joshua's mouth], shall not depart out of thy mouth [“this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth”, Josh. 1:8, s.w.], nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever”.

Indeed, the Messianic prophecy of Dt. 18:18 had a potential Messianic and primary fulfillment in Joshua: “I will raise them up [God ‘rose up’ Joshua- s.w. Josh. 1:2; 7:10,13; 8:1,3] a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Joshua's life was framed to be like that of Moses- e.g. he too was told to remove his shoe when on holy ground, also held his

hands up whilst Israel fought their enemies]; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him [Joshua is constantly presented as telling Israel what God commanded him- Josh. 4:8,10,17; 6:10; 8:8: “according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you”; 8:27]. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”.

The ‘likeness’ between Moses and the prophet like unto him was in that the prophet would also speak God’s words in a similar way. Josh. 11:15 therefore significantly comments: “As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua: and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses”. Joshua was a potential Messiah.

We have shown earlier that Ps. 91 is Moses’ commentary upon Joshua, the young man who dwelt in the tabernacle (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), Joshua the potential Messiah. The Psalm describes how Joshua was miraculously preserved from the punishments which befell his generation in the wilderness; thousands fell at his side from the various plagues sent to waste away his peer group. But he was preserved. In this context we read that the Angels would be given charge over him, lest he dash his foot against a stone during that wilderness journey (Ps. 91:11,12). Yet these words were understood by the Lord Jesus as relevant to Him personally, when *He* was in the wilderness (Mt. 4:6). The Lord Jesus clearly saw Joshua as a type of Himself. The double application of Psalm 91 to both Joshua and Jesus makes Joshua a potential Messiah.

It would therefore appear that Joshua potentially could have been the Jesus-Messiah figure, leading Israel into what could have become the Kingdom of God. He could have given the people rest; but he didn’t. Yet the possibilities and prophecies relating to Joshua were then reinterpreted and fulfilled in another ‘Jesus’, the Son of God. Solomon was another case of this. God’s servant Joshua was intended to “prosper” (Josh. 1:7); but in the end it was the Lord Jesus through His death who was the servant who would “deal prudently” [s.w. ‘prosper’, Is. 52:13]. And so, in His foreknowledge, God spoke of “another day” when His begotten Son would fulfil what all those men could potentially have achieved, and so much more (Heb. 4:8). The lesson for us is that so much has been potentially prepared for us to achieve. Our salvation may not necessarily depend upon achieving all those things, but all the same, so much potentially is possible which we refuse to reach up to, because we are petty minimalists, like Israel, satisfied with their little farm in the valley, rather than seeking to possess the fullness of the Kingdom prepared for them.

4-11 Joshua And The Name of God

Here is a chronological list of all the references in the spoken words of Joshua to God:

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

the living God

the Lord of all the earth

Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

hand of Jehovah

Jehovah your God

my lord

Jehovah.

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah

O Lord Jehovah

Lord

Jehovah, the God of Israel

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

my God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah, the God of your fathers

Jehovah our God

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Last words:

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah your God

Jehovah your God

Jehovah

Jehovah, the God of Israel

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah ... a holy God ... a jealous God

Jehovah

Jehovah

Jehovah, the God of Israel

Jehovah

your God

Only at the end of his days does Joshua make a specific reference to the declaration of the Name of God, when he speaks of "Jehovah ... a holy God ... a jealous God". Yet Moses' comment upon Joshua: "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name" (Ps. 91:14) implies that the Father foresaw Joshua's future spiritual attainment and treated him accordingly. We likewise need to remember this in coping with the spiritual immaturity of our brethren. Moses considered that Joshua would "say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in whom I trust" (Ps. 91:2). And yet only twice does Joshua use the phrase "my God" or "my Lord". Again, it seems that Moses is imputing to Joshua a higher level of intimacy with God than he actually achieved.

4-12 Rahab And The Fall Of Jericho

The spies were sent out "secretly" (Josh. 2:1). I'd argue that the sending out of the 12 spies about 40 years earlier was essentially a lack of faith- in the fact that God's Angel had gone ahead of them anyway to spy out the land, and Yahweh Himself had told Israel how good the land was. Perhaps the secrecy involved a sense that this was in fact not really a very spiritual decision and Joshua was somehow furtive about it. Israel had never known urban life nor perhaps even seen walled cities like Jericho. The spies entered the city at evening time, and the gate was shut. Strangers always attract attention in such places- let alone when the city was in the direct line of attack of the Hebrews. The language / accent of the two spies would've given them away. According to the record in Joshua 2, it seems they entered the city gates at dusk, the gates were shut, and they'd have perceived that they were being

watched and had been noticed as suspicious strangers. And so they used some desperate initiative, and dived into a whorehouse nearby to the gate. This was the sort of place strangers would go to, as it would be today. We imagine them entering the house, and meeting the madame of the house. "What do you want?" was as dumb a question as the doctor asking the patient "How are you feeling today?". Rahab was a smart woman, accustomed to strangers, and knew what was going on. Within the first couple of sentences, she'd have figured who they were. And it seems they spoke for a short time, maybe an hour or so, realized they were busted, understood they were in a death trap within that walled city, and threw themselves on her mercy.

And there, providence kicked in. James 2:25 calls those men "messengers", with a message Rahab believed. They hardly had an hour to tell her the message, before men were knocking on the door enquiring what Rahab knew about the spies. In that brief time, she believed a very sketchy and incomplete Gospel of the Kingdom. And her works reflected that faith, in telling the men [whom local culture would've barred from entering the house of a single woman] that the spies had come and gone. "That was *quick!*", we can imagine the King's men joking.

There was weakness and dysfunction all around this story. The men "lodged" with Rahab (Josh. 2:1)- but the Hebrew term is often translated "slept with..." in a sexual context. In fact, whenever the term is used in relation to a woman, let alone a prostitute, it implies intercourse. As a word it does mean simply to sleep... but it is strange that no other term for 'lodging the night' is used, and that the term in the context of a female or prostitute does usually carry a sexual meaning. Whilst I don't believe the spies did sleep with Rahab, it's strange that no other word for 'lodging' is used. The ambiguity is, I suggest, purposeful. But they and their message were 'welcomed in peace' by Rahab (Heb. 11:31), she 'received' their message and justified herself by works by protecting them (James 2:25).

This would contribute to an overall theme in the book of Joshua of Israel's weakness- the land wasn't fully possessed, Joshua appears himself as weak in many ways, he didn't fully follow the admittedly hard-to-follow act of Moses, Rahab believed the very words of promise which Israel didn't believe, the spies were sent out secretly by Joshua with no command from God to do this, when God had promised to go before Israel and give them victory... and yet God worked through all this. Even to the extent of using the weakness of the spies in going in to a brothel and "sleeping" with the madame... in order to save that woman and her family, and the lives of the spies, all in a manner which through human weakness glorified the God of Israel. We'll comment later on how Rahab had an extensive knowledge of parts of Moses' words and law, and this was the basis for her faith. Yet where did she, a whore in Jericho, get that knowledge from? Presumably from her clients, who would've been travellers who had heard these things and passed them on to her. All this is wonderful encouragement for all sinners- that God has a way of working through sin to His glory, and He doesn't give up so easily with human weakness.

Heb. 11:31 comments that "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace". Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amorite and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way. Remember that she was also aware of what

Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and *not* make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that *she* would be the exception, that with *her* a covenant would be made. When she says that "we *have* heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people *shall* hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we *have* heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we *are* afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Rahab's Witness

Rahab was told to bind the scarlet cord in her window "when we come into the land" (Josh. 2:18). But Rahab bound it there immediately when they left- as if she recognized that her land was already in Israel's hands (Josh. 2:21). Considering the whole town was wondering how the spies had escaped, and she was under suspicion, to leave the escape rope dangling there, indeed to take it up and then place it there again immediately (so 2:21 implies), was really stupid. She didn't need to do that at that stage. But the joy of the Gospel should make us fools for Christ's sake. But does it, in our postmodern age? When was the last time the joy of the good news we know, lead you to do something humanly foolish? It could be gathered from Heb. 11:31 that Rahab preached to others the message she had received from the spies- for the inspired commentary there notes that Rahab did not perish with those "that believed not"- *apeitheo* suggesting disbelief, a wilful refusal to believe. What message did Jericho not believe? There was no particular message for them from the words of Moses or Joshua. The message was presumably an appeal from Rahab, to repent and accept the God of Israel as she had done- to cast themselves upon His mercy. And in any case, as a prostitute estranged from her family, either due to her profession or because estrangement from them had led her to it, she must have gone to her estranged family and preached to them, bringing them within her despised house.

The question, of course, is: 'Why then was not Rahab killed by the people of Jericho if she openly preached to them about the God of Israel?'. The ancient law code of Hammurabi contains the following statute: "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death" (S.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1956], 2:45). Perhaps she was so despised that she was untouchable, or treated as mad. Perhaps former clients of hers in the city's leadership decided it would be better to let her 'get religion' rather than spill any beans about them. But it could be said that it was a miracle she wasn't murdered for her witness. She certainly ran the risk of it. If men and women with a far less complete understanding of the Gospel could risk their lives for it... what does our understanding and faith convict *us* to do for the sake of witnessing to it? Give money towards it? Risk our lives, health, convenience in travelling for it? Risk our embarrassment and loss of standing in the workplace or family by preaching it...?

Our knowledge of the Gospel of the Kingdom is far more detailed than that of Rahab, who picked up snatches of it from her clients, and had at most an hour's pressured conversation with the spies before she had to show whether or not she believed it. If it motivated her to do all she did- what about us?

Following The Angel

As Israel were called to follow the Angel after their Red Sea baptism, so we too follow where the Angel leads. The conquest of Jericho is a classic example of following the Angel. Josh. 5:13 speaks of the Angel who was the commander of *Yahweh's* army appearing to Joshua, the commander of God's human army on earth, and standing "over against him", i.e. dead opposite him. Clearly enough, Joshua was being shown that he had an opposite number in Heaven, a representative there before the throne of God- just as each of us do. Note in passing how the Angel answers Joshua's question- 'Are you for me, or against me?'. God has no interest in taking sides in human arguments, demonizing the one side and glorifying the other. The response was simply that the Angel stood for God and was His representative (Josh. 5:14). Religious people so easily fall into this trap of demonizing their enemies, on the basis that "God is with me, and therefore, not with you my opponent, in fact, He hates you because I hate you". The true God and His Angelic servants are far above this kind of primitive, binary dichotomy.

Following the Angel is the theme that lies behind God's statement that because He had already given Jericho to Israel, therefore they should arise and take it. So many victories have been prepared for us in prospect- against addictions, engrained weaknesses of character, habits, impossible situations. Israel had to follow the ark, where the Angelic presence of God was (Josh. 6:2 cp. 6:8). The people were to go up into Jericho "straight before them" (Josh. 6:5,20), just as the Cherubim-Angels have "straight feet" (Ez. 1:7,9,12). They were to follow in the Angel's steps.

The command to "shout" was a reflection of the belief Israel were to have in the fact that God *had already* given them the city- for the Hebrew for "shout" usually refers to a shout of victory. The word is translated "... will I triumph" in Ps. 60:8; 108:9. The same idea of shouting in victory over a city which has been given to God's people recurs in Jer. 50:15- "Shout against her round about [cp. compassing the walls of Jericho]... her foundations *are* [present tense] fallen, her walls [cp. Jericho's] *are* thrown down". And this speaks of our latter day victory against Babylon- thus making the whole account of earnest relevance to us who live in the last days, and who will see Babylon fall by faith. Notice how literal Babylon fell by the water of the river being dried up, and the walls being opened- just the same sequence of events that occurred at Jericho. Likewise 1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment- and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation. Thus according to the allusion, Rahab and her family represent all the faithful.

God's Battle Plan

Everything about the battle plan was somehow humanly foolish- to yet again attempt to teach Israel, old and new, that victory comes from following God's way, and His way is humanly foolish. The warriors were circumcised before the battle (Josh. 5:2)- and we know from the Biblical record of Shechem how this would've weakened the men- for this was only a week

or so before the battle. The manna wasn't phased out- it stopped abruptly just before the battle of Jericho (Josh. 5:12). The people would likely have been short of food, and would've been dealing with the problems associated with a new diet- after 40 years! Walking around the city seven times, starting at dawn, would've made the people tired. There was no advantage of shock or surprise by doing this. Planning the final assault for late afternoon was hardly smart either- humanly speaking! But all this was- and is- to teach God's people that victory *His* way involves shedding our human strength, just as Gideon was likewise taught so dramatically.

Josh. 6:10, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, *until* the day I tell you, 'Shout!'", implies that the people maybe didn't know the battle plan- each day they would've walked around the city in silence, and nothing happened. The command to "Shout!" didn't come- for six days. The whole exercise was surely to develop their faith. Again, this was the most crazy of battle plans, in human terms. Heb. 11:30 associates the circling of the walls with faith: "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been circled seven days".

2 Cor. 10:3-4 is perhaps an allusion to the way that Jericho was taken with such a humanly weak battle plan: "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ". The point of the allusion is for us to see ourselves as those nervous Israelites desperately clinging on to their faith in God's victory rather than human strength. And we each have our Jerichos- habits, life-dominating patterns of thinking, that seem so impossible to shift.

Of course, the deliverance at the Red Sea had been intended to teach Israel these very lessons. And the account of the fall of Jericho is recorded in similar language, in order to teach the same lesson. Rahab's house had to be identified by a scarlet cord- like the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' homes in Egypt. The silence demanded of the people was surely to recall Ex. 14:14, there the people standing before the Red Sea were assured: "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent". Compare the command to keep silent whilst *Yahweh* fought, with the common practice of yelling war cries as an ancient army approached their enemy. All human convention, wisdom and strength, was placed in purposeful opposition to what seemed quite counter-instinctive- to be utterly silent whilst *God* did the fighting.

Undeserved Blessing

There's a distinct theme in the record that actually, God's people didn't do according to His ideal plan, and yet still He gave them the victory. One wonders whether the comment that "So the ark of the Lord compassed the city" (Josh. 6:11) could imply that the entire fighting force of Israel didn't bother doing as commanded on the first circuit of the city- possibly they just sent the ark around it. The people were to shout when the trumpets sounded (Josh. 6:10). But in reality, like a Sunday School play gone wrong, the people shouted, the trumpets sounded, and then the people again shouted (Josh. 6:20).

Likewise, compare the above evidence for Rahab's preaching the message of the spies, with the terms of the covenant thrashed out with her- if she were to "utter" (Heb. to preach, advertise openly] the "business" of the spies, then the covenant would be null and void (Josh. 2:20). She did indeed do this, and yet the covenant still stood. Perhaps the agreement insisted

upon by the spies was somewhat self-protective, without the ambition which Rahab had to bring others to throw themselves upon God's grace. This would only make her spiritual perception and ambition stand out the more. All this fits in with the overall theme of the book of Joshua- that Israel were given the land, Ephraim and Manasseh were allowed to return to their lot East of Jordan, despite the fact that they were disobedient and didn't drive out all the Canaanites as required by God. Taking the crossing of the Red Sea as a type of baptism, the wilderness walk as symbolic of our probationary lives now (1 Cor. 10:1-3), the entrance of the promised land speaks of our entrance to God's Kingdom- and this will likewise be by grace, in the face of all the mess ups, disobedience, failure to obey... which we're all so guilty of.

Yet according to Heb. 11:30, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down ...". Whose faith? What faith? Was Joshua-Jesus' faith counted to the people? Or was their very weak, hope-for-the-best faith all the same accepted as faith by God's grace?

Chapter 5: SAMSON

5.1 A Character Study Of Samson

Biblical history is unlike any other national history of a people in that it seems to emphasize the spiritual weakness of Israel. The heroes are nearly all flawed- and that, surely, is so as to give us realistic inspiration to rise up to their spirit, knowing how flawed we also are. And yet there's a tendency amongst some of us to idealize these men, in the same way as the Catholic and Orthodox churches portray them as white faced, haloed saints. Judaism has done the same. Despite the evident weaknesses of Samson (and other judges, e.g. Gideon) as revealed in the inspired record, later Jewish commentary sought to idealize them. Take Ecclesiasticus 46:11,12: "The judges too... all men whose hearts were never disloyal, who never turned their backs on the Lord...". Perhaps the psychological basis for this tendency is that we simply don't want to be personally challenged by the fact that heroes of faith were *so* much like us...

We know, or we ought to, how weak our moral judgment is, how prone we are to forget the degree to which God has justified us from our sins. This weakness is seen in the difficulty we have in analyzing the characters we read of in Scripture. For example, from reading the record of Lot in Genesis, it would seem that Lot was a materialistic, weak, faithless man who is shown to be the exact opposite to Abraham, who is held up as the example of real faith. Yet in the New Testament record, Peter points out that Lot was a righteous man. We are therefore left to conclude that the Genesis record is highlighting the weaker aspects of Lot's character, without commenting on the good points. We may have the same sort of surprise when we read in Hebrews 11 that Samson was a man of outstanding faith- yet the record we are reading at the moment in Judges seems framed to paint Samson as a womanizer, a man who lacked self-control and who only came to God in times of dire personal need.

But just imagine if only the negative incidents in our own lives, over a period of 20 (or 40?) years, were recorded. Anyone reading it would conclude that we were a complete hypocrite to claim to have any hope of salvation. In our self-examination, we sometimes see only this negative record; we fail to see that God has justified us, that in His record book, we are ranked among the faithful, as Samson was in Hebrews 11. Any character study of Samson needs to bear this in mind. Samson, over 40 years of service, courted a girl not in the faith and tried to marry her; once went to a prostitute in Gaza; and had an on-and-off relationship

with a worthless woman in Sorek for a few months (?). And yet he seems to have lived the rest of his life full of faith and zeal- although I say this not in any way minimizing the mistakes he made. This is hardly evidence that Samson was the renegade sex-maniac that he is sometimes made out to be.

Samson's Aim

Samson lived at a time when Israel were hopelessly weak. His great desire was to do the work of the promised seed, who would save Israel from their enemies. He resented the Philistine domination and sought, single-handed, to overcome it in faith, not only for himself, but for his weaker brethren. As predestiny would have it, in recognition of his zeal for these things, he came from Zorah (13:2), 'the hornet'- a symbol of the Divine power that would drive the foreign tribes out of the land, as Samson dedicated himself to do (Dt. 7:20). And his father's name, Manoah, meant "rest", or inheritance (cp. Josh. 1:13,15). Samson-ben-Manoah was therefore Samson, the son of the promised inheritance.

Jud. 17-21 contain various pictures of and insights into the apostasy of the tribe of Dan, providing the backdrop for a character study of Samson. These chapters seem chronologically out of place; they belong before the Samson story. 18:30 speaks of Jonathan the grandson of Moses, and 20:28 of Phinehas the grandson of Aaron (cp. Num. 25:11), which would place these events at the beginning of the period of the Judges, once Israel had first settled in the land. Dan's apostasy is suggested by the way in which he is omitted from the tribes of the new Israel in Rev. 7. Zorah, Samson's home town, was originally Judah's inheritance (Josh. 15:33-36), but they spurned it, and passed it to Dan (Josh. 19:41), who also weren't interested; for they migrated to the north and took over the land belonging to the less warlike Sidonians (Jud. 18:2,7-10). Their selfishness is reflected by the way they chide with him: "What is this that thou hast done *unto us*?" (15:11). "They had become reconciled to the dominion of sin since it did not appear to do much harm. They could still grow their crops etc." . It is even possible that his parents had elements of weakness in them; for his name doesn't include the 'Yah' prefix, and 'Samson' ('splendour of the sun') may be a reference to the nearby town of Beth Shemesh ('house of the sun-god'). It could be argued that because the father was responsible for his son's marriage partner (12:9; 14:2; 15:2; Gen. 24:3-9; Neh. 10:30), therefore Samson's father was equally guilty for Samson's 'marriage out'. Many of the commands against intermarriage were directed to parents, commanding them not to give their children in intermarriage. All the Judges were preceded by a period of Israel prostituting themselves to the surrounding nations (Jud. 2:16-19); and this was evidently true of the period in which Samson grew up. From this apostate tribe and background came Samson. The way his own people angrily rebuked him that "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are lords over us?" (15:11) was tacit recognition of the depth of their apostasy. They seemed to have no regret that they were fulfilling the many earlier prophecies that they would be dominated by their enemies if they were disobedient to Yahweh. The fact that Israel were dominated throughout Samson's life by the Philistines is proof enough that they were apostate at this time (13:1; cp. 15:20; 16:31).

Yet Lev. 26:3-8 had promised dramatic success against their enemies *on the basis of* obedience to the Law. The fact Samson had this power was therefore proof that he really was reckoned by God as zealously obedient to the Law; and yet he was like this in the midst of a sadly apostate Israel. This character study of Samson takes this view of his strength. This is in itself no mean achievement: to rise to a level of spirituality much higher than that achieved by the surrounding brotherhood. When Paul spoke of us shining as lights in a dark world, in "a

crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15), he was using language which Moses had earlier used of how apostate Israel were the "crooked and perverse generation" (Dt. 32:5). The point of his allusion may have been that despite the darkness and apostasy of the surrounding brotherhood, we must all the same shine with the constancy of the stars.

His motivation for this came from God's word. Joshua's final exhortation to Israel contains a passage which reads as some kind of prophecy of Samson. It is proof enough that Samson is to be read as a symbol of Israel: "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses...that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you (true in Samson's time)...but cleave unto the Lord your God...no man hath been able to stand before you (this was Samson)...one man of you shall chase a thousand (cp. Jud. 15:16): for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you (this was exactly true of Samson in Jud. 15:18)...take good heed unto yourselves...else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and make marriages with them (as Samson did), and go in unto them, and they to you (cp. Jud. 15:1; 16:, where Samson went in to the Philistine women): know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you (cp. 16:20); but they shall be snares and traps unto you (Delilah!)...and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish" (Josh. 23:6-13). This passage would associate Samson's God-given strength and victory over the Philistines with his obedience to God's word. It was not that Samson was just an arbitrary tool in God's hand. We will see in our later notes that frequently the things Samson says and does are full of allusion to various passages in the Law, and also earlier incidents recorded in Judges which would have been known to him probably as the oral word of God. We will also see that Samson was possessed of a finely tuned conscience. The first instance of this is when we read how the Spirit of Yahweh troubled him (Heb.) from time to time in the camp of Dan, in the very places where his people had earlier failed to follow up the victories of Joshua-Jesus by their spiritual laziness (13:25).

There is further evidence, from later Scripture, that Samson's zeal was born from the word. A character study of Samson needs to consider what later Scripture implies about him. It seems that Jeremiah was one of several later characters who found inspiration in Samson, and alluded to him in their prayers to God, seeing the similarities between his spirit and theirs:

"O Yahweh [Samson only used the Yahweh Name at the end of his life], thou knowest: remember me [as Samson asked to be remembered for good, 16:28], and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors ["that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines" , 16:28]...know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke [the Philistines doubtless mocked Yahweh as well as Samson]. Thy words were found, and I did eat them [cp. Samson loving the word and eating the honey which he "found" in the lion]: and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...I sat not in the assembly of the mockers...I sat alone because of thy hand [Samson's separation from an apostate Israel]...why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable?" [the finality of his blindness] (Jer. 15:15-17). If these connections are valid, Samson's love of the word was a very big part of his life.

The Strength Of Samson

Samson's zeal to deliver Israel was confirmed by God, in that he was given gifts of Holy Spirit in order to enable him to deliver Israel. However, this doesn't mean that he himself was a man rippling with muscle. The Philistines wanted to find out the *secret* of his strength; it wasn't that he had such evidently bulging muscles that the answer was self-evident. He told

Delilah that if his head were shaved, he would be like any other man (16:17). He was therefore just an ordinary man, made strong by the Father after the pattern of the Saviour he typified. The stress is on the way in which the Spirit came upon Samson (14:6,19; 15:14), as it did on other judges (3:10; 6:34; 11:29). "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" (Zech. 4:6) may be referring to these incidents; demonstrating that when God's spirit acts on a man, it is not human muscle at all that operates. He is even listed amongst those who out of weakness were made strong (Heb. 11:34). A character study of Samson must remember this about him. This could suggest that he was even weaker than a normal man; or it could be a reference to the way in which out of his final spiritual weakness and degradation he was so wonderfully strengthened (16:28). It should be noted that his strength was not somehow magically associated with his hair; his strength went from him because Yahweh departed from him (16:19,20). He had to beg his own people not to try to kill him themselves (even whilst he had long hair), because he knew that the strength he had was only for certain specific purposes- i.e., to deliver God's people from the Philistines (15:12). When he was strolling in the Timnath vineyards, a lion came across him (15:5 AVmg.). It was only after it roared against him that the Spirit came upon him and enabled him to kill it. He had to take the first nervous steps towards that lion in faith, and then the Spirit came upon him and confirmed his actions. The fact he didn't tell his parents what he had done may not only indicate his humility, but also suggests he was not naturally a strong man. To say he had just killed a lion would seem ridiculous (14:6). The Spirit likewise came upon him to kill the Philistines in Lehi (15:14). It wasn't a permanent strength. This is in harmony with the way in which the Spirit was used in the NT. The Spirit came upon the apostles and they were filled up with it, as it were, and then drained of it once the work was done; and had to be filled with it again when the next eventuality arose. Indeed, the word *baptizo* strictly means 'to fill and thereby submerge'; hence the use of the term in classical Greek concerning the sinking of ships or the filling of a bottle. Therefore the idea of baptism with Holy Spirit could simply be describing a temporary filling of the Apostles with power in order to achieve certain specific aims. If this is indeed how Samson experienced his fillings with the Spirit, it throws new light on the way he allowed Delilah to apparently suck information out of him. She asked for the secret of his strength; he knew she would betray him; he told her; she betrayed him, which meant a group of Philistine warriors came and hid themselves in the house (full known to Samson); and he then rose up and killed them, using the gift of God's Spirit. He was so sure that God would use him in this way, that he thought he could do anything in order to entice Philistine warriors into his presence- even if it involved gratifying his own flesh. The way he threw away the jawbone after killing 1000 Philistines at Lehi may suggest that he felt that now he had done the job, the instrument was useless; and he begged the Lord to give him drink. He knew that now he was an ordinary man again (15:18). It must be emphasized, in line with this understanding of Samson's strength, that his strength was not tied up in his hair. He only ground in the prison a short time, until the great sacrifice was offered to Dagon in thanks for Samson's capture. In that time, his hair grew- but not very long, in such a short time (no more than months, 16:22,23). The growth of his hair is to be associated with his renewed determination to keep the Nazarite vow. He was reckoned by God as a lifelong Nazarite (15:7); the time when his hair was cut was therefore overlooked by God. His zealous repentance and desire to respond to the gracious way in which God still recognized him as a lifelong Nazarite, although he wasn't one, inspired him to a real faith and repentance. It was this, not the fact he had some hair again, which led to God empowering him to destroy the palace of Dagon.

The Weakness Of Samson

It would be simplistic for a character study of Samson to see Samson as some kind of sex maniac-cum-believer. He was a man of faith who, amidst a weak and indifferent brotherhood, tried to rise up to the spirit of Messiah in delivering Israel from their spiritual enemies. In order to devote himself to this, it seems that he chose the single life. In common with others who trod that path of zeal (e.g. Timothy and possibly Hezekiah), he couldn't maintain it all the time. He stumbled, and his stumbling in this area resulted in him reasoning that the end (i.e. the work he was doing) justified the means, and that therefore he could do God's work in a way which in fact gratified his own flesh. He had to learn the spirit of the cross-carrying Christ; the lesson of the whole burnt offering: that the *whole* of a man's life must be affected by the cross- not just those parts which we are willing to surrender ⁽¹⁾. We can't mix the service of God with the service of self. There is no third road. Because Samson failed to realize this (until the end), he was a man who in many ways never quite made it; he never quite lived up to the spiritual potential which he had. Although he was to be the beginning of serious deliverance of Israel from the Philistines (13:5), the whole story of Samson is prefaced by the fact that during the 40 years of Samson's' ministry (15:20 + 16:31), " the Lord delivered (Israel) into the hand of the Philistines" (13:1). It is emphasized in 14:4 that " at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel" ; and the men of Judah chode with him: " Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?" (15:11). The point is hammered home in 15:20: " He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years" . God's intention was that Samson was to deliver Israel from the Philistines; but somehow he never rose up to it. They remained under the Philistines, even during his ministry. He made a few sporadic attempts in red hot personal zeal, confirmed by God, to deliver Israel. But he never rose up to the potential level that God had prepared for him in prospect. And yet for all this, he was accepted in the final analysis as a man of faith. It may be possible to understand that the breaking of his Nazariteship was yet another way in which he never lived up to his God-given potential ⁽²⁾. He was " a Nazarite unto God from the womb to the day of his death" (13:7). Yet he broke the Nazarite vow by touching dead bodies and having his hair shaven (Num. 6:6). This may mean that he chose to break God's ideal intention for him, to take a lower and lower level of service to God until actually he had slipped away altogether. However, it may be that God counted *his desire* for the high standard of Nazariteship to him. He saw him as if this never happened, in the same way as He saw Abraham as if he had offered up Isaac, even though ultimately he didn't (Heb. 11:17; James 2:21). Intention, not the human strength of will to do the act, seems to be what God earnestly looks for.

As a final note on the aim and purpose of Samson's life, reflect how the Angel declared that he would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Jud. 13:5). Yet he died with the Philistines firmly in control over Israel. This was potentially possible in the Angelic plan; but he didn't live up to what had been made possible in prospect. Significantly, Samson's mother omitted to repeat this part of the Angel's conversation when she relayed the incident to her husband (Jud. 13:7)- perhaps because she didn't believe that her child would be capable of this. And perhaps this was a factor in his failure to achieve what God had intended for him.

Notes

(1) See *Taking Up The Cross*.

(2) It may be fair comment on the character of Samson that he was a man who never quite made it, and therefore didn't achieve the potential deliverance which would have been possible. However, this must dovetail with the fact that Israel's deliverance at the hands of the judges was related to their crying to Yahweh in faith and repentance (Neh. 9:27,28). It seems that they did precious little of this during the time of Samson, from what we know of them from the record. Therefore Samson didn't deliver them as far as he potentially could have done. And yet in God's perfect planning, this worked together with the fact that Samson himself limited the deliverance he could achieve by his moral weakness.

5.2 Samson And Deja Vu

5-2-1 Repetition In Biblical Narratives

The phenomena of situations repeating within and between human lives has been noticed by many. Plutarch wrote twenty three volumes in his series *Parallel Lives*, comparing the amazing similarities between the life experiences of characters like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. We can discern the same between Biblical characters. It will be apparent to any regular Bible reader that there is a tremendous repetition within the Biblical narratives. Individuals tend to go through very similar experiences, and often the same words are used in the descriptions of the experience or their response to it. Some of these similarities are so specific and humanly unlikely to be replicated that one can only conclude that there was a higher power over-ruling their situations. It may be that the Angels work in human lives according to some kind of Divine pattern, and this accounts for the sense of repetition and *deja vu*. But it may also be because it is God's intention that we meditate upon the lives of previous servants to the point where we see their experiences coming through, in principle, in our own lives; and we are urged on to a like victory as they attained. Consider the following of many possible examples of this repetition in Biblical narratives:

- The way Saul returns from pursuing David because of a rumour of invasion is so similar to Rabshakeh's retreat from Jerusalem after rumours of incursions (1 Sam. 23:27). As Samuel tarried longer than Saul expected, so Amasa "tarried longer than the set time which [David] had appointed him" (2 Sam. 20:5).

- The history of Joseph contains many strange echoes within it, as the essence of issues as well as specific circumstances are repeated. Thus a false story was given credibility and Joseph was imprisoned on the basis of false evidence involving his garment; his brothers misused another garment of Joseph to tell a false story about him. And the story of Tamar is interjected in Genesis 38, also including a garment story. Indeed, there's a pattern of episodes being duplicated throughout the Joseph story. Twice Joseph is put in a dungeon- once by his brothers, another time by Potiphar; the dreams are in pairs; Joseph twice asks that Benjamin accompany the brothers; the brothers visit Egypt twice and both times they are given two audiences with Joseph. And within the recorded dialogues there is repetition and duplication; thus the brothers explain twice why it would be impossible to return without Benjamin; they are twice accused of spying.

- Asa's faith was rewarded when he faced a massive Ethiopian army; but some years later, God repeated the situation. A huge Israelite army faced him; and instead of trusting in Yahweh, he gave the temple treasures to Syria so that they would come and fight the battle for him. And God wasn't slow to point out how circumstances had repeated, but this time Asa had failed the test: " Were not the Ethiopians and Lubims a huge host...? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand... herein you have done foolishly: therefore from henceforth you shall have wars" (2 Chron. 16:8,9). The "wars" God brought upon Asa weren't merely punishments; they were yet further opportunities for Asa to face the same situations, and overcome them with faith. And God likewise works in our lives.

- The incidents involving Moses and Jacob meeting women at a well are evidently intended to be seen as reflecting some unseen Heavenly template.

- When Joshua was leading the Israelite army, he was given victory because Moses kept his arms outstretched in prayer. Later, circumstances repeated, so that Joshua had the opportunity to make the same effort for others as had been made for him. For Joshua had to keep his hand stretched out, until his men had destroyed all the men of Ai (Josh. 8:26). And throughout life, this occurs for us- a situation wherein we were shown grace repeats, in essence, so that we have a chance to show the same grace to others which we received.

- The Ephraimites came over as offended because they weren't invited to fight in a battle, even though they had shown no inclination; and they did this with both Gideon and Jephthah (Jud. 8:1; 12:1)

- Mephibosheth eating at David's table is somehow similar to Jehoiachin being raised to eat at that of the king of Babylon.

- The similarities between the David / Nabal / Abigail experience and those of Jacob, whilst he too kept flocks (1 Sam. 25:35 = Gen. 32:20; 25:18 = Gen. 32:13; 25:27 = Gen. 33:11).

- The way Abigail asked David to remember her for good when he came in his kingdom, knowing that he was perfect and suffering unjustly....is exactly the spirit of the thief on the cross. And David like Jesus responds that he has "accepted thy person" (1 Sam. 25).

- Judah and his brothers sent Joseph's blood stained coat to Jacob. It's recorded that they invited their father to "discern, pray, whether it is your son's robe or not. And he recognized it, and said: It is my son's robe" (Gen. 37:32,33). The very same Hebrew words are used in Gen. 38:25,26 in describing how Tamar *sent* to Judah saying '*Discern, pray, whose are these, the signet and the cords and the staff. And Judah recognized them and said...*'. The whole point of the similarities is to show how God sought to teach Judah how his father Jacob had felt. Note the parallels between the he-goat in Gen. 37:31 and the "kid of the goats" of Gen. 38:17-20; "and he refused to be comforted" of Gen. 37:35 is a designed contrast with how "Judah was comforted" (Gen. 38:12).

- God created a great wind with which He brought Jonah and his fellows to their knees in Jonah 1:4. God later creates another great wind with which to teach Jonah something else (Jonah 4:8). Jonah ought to have perceived the same hand of the same God at work with him. Jonah's life "ebbed away" inside the fish (Jonah 2:8)- and a very similar word is used about his experience as he sat under the gourd (Jonah 4:8). In the fish, Jonah prayed that God would save his life, and was heard. But when he was made to feel the same again, he instead prayed God to take away his life. Perhaps this shows that even when we respond well to circumstances, those same circumstances may repeat in order to test us as to whether we will continue to make that right response.

- Joash did right before God whilst the priest Jehoiada was alive, and then apostasized; Uzziah did likewise, with Zechariah the priest (2 Chron. 24:2; 26:5). He didn't reflect upon the personal implications of Divine history. And we too must appreciate that there are Bible characters whose experiences are framed in terms directly relevant to us- for our learning. Interestingly, straight after Jehoiada died, the princes of the land came to Joash with a request, which he wrongly listened to. This has great similarities with the tragic mistake made

by Rehoboam after Solomon died (2 Chron. 10:3,4 cp. 24:17). So Joash was given chance after chance to be directed back to previous examples and be instructed by them- but he went on in his own way.

- The genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. Thus both Arphachsad and Shelah each lived 403 years after the births of the eldest sons; Shelah, Peleg and Serug were each 30 when their first sons were born. Abraham and Shem both had sons at 100 years old (Gen. 11:10). And it is the very nature of Christian fellowship that God has arranged that our human lives likewise have elements of amazing similarity of pattern.

- The way Peter was given a vision and asked to eat what he had previously thought unclean has many similarities with Ezekiel going through a similar experience (Ez. 4:10-14 cp. Acts 10:14).
- In 2 Kings 5:9, Elisha sat in his house and messengers from a powerful man, Naaman the leper, came to him; and displayed an amazing calm before them. This situation repeated in 2 Kings 6:32, where Elisha again sits in his house and the messengers of an aggressive King came to him. The theme of lepers recurs in this latter context also (2 Kings 7:3). And in 2 Kings 5:18 we read of Naaman as a man upon whose arm a King (of Syria) leaned; and we find one of those sent to Elisha the second time was likewise "a lord upon whose hand the King (of Israel) leaned (2 Kings 7:2).
- Obadiah faithfully hid Yahweh's prophets, at the risk of his life (1 Kings 18:13); but when tested again in this matter, he was fearful to appear to Ahab to have been hiding Elijah's location (1 Kings 18:10-12). We can pass the test at one stage in our lives, and yet when the same test repeats later, we may still fail.
- There's a repeated circumstance of a woman promised in marriage to a man being given to another- in the lives of Samson and David (1 Sam. 18:19).
- David sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him, and they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail's grace and wisdom saved him from (1 Sam. 25). And yet the same situation repeated in its essence when he sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed (2 Sam. 10:3). Again, David got angry- but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he did get into an impossible fight... from which by grace God delivered him. Could it not be that David failed to learn from his previous experience...?
- The signs done by Moses before Pharaoh have evident connection with the later plagues brought upon him- they were all "that you may know" (Ex. 7:17 etc.). The staff, stretched out right hand, snakes, the rod "swallowing" the serpent rods of Egypt (symbols of Pharaoh- Ez. 29:3-5; 32:2) just as the Egyptians were to be swallowed at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12), leprosy / boils, water / blood all repeat. The signs were thus both an encouragement to believe as well as a warning of judgment to come. Pharaoh was presented with the possibility of either faith, or destruction. Note in passing that God's hardening of that man's heart didn't mean that He made no effort to save him nor appeal to him.
- The experience of Moses at the burning bush was to prepare him for God's later revelation to him at Sinai. The bush is called the *seneh*, three times in the same sentence (Ex. 3:2)- and the Hebrew strongly suggests the word 'Sinai'.

- Balaam is a classic example. His eyes were opened to the Angel blocking his way, and when he realized how he had closed his spiritual vision to the Angel trying to stop him going to Balak, he fell down on his face (Num. 22:31). But when he is later given a vision of Balak's judgment, the vision which Balaam didn't want to see, he describes himself as "the man whose eye was closed" and yet had to see the vision with his eyes open (Num. 24:3,4 RV). He didn't learn the lesson. He closed his eyes so as not to see the vision, and yet God forced him to open his eyes and see it. And again, he fell down upon his face (Num. 24:4,16 RV), as he had when the Angel blocked his path earlier. He wouldn't learn his lesson, he wouldn't perceive how circumstances were being repeated in God's desperate effort to get him to repent.

- Joseph was told to arise and take Jesus to Egypt; and he arose from sleep and did it. And the same double 'arising' occurred when he left Egypt to return to Israel (Mt 2:13,14 cp. 20,21).

- The disciples' eyes were heavy and they fell asleep at the critical moment. But earlier, "having remained awake", the same disciples were blessed with a vision of the Lord's glory (Lk. 9:32 RVmg.). If they had remained awake in the garden, they would have seen the Lord being glorified by Angelic visitation. But they didn't perceive how the circumstances were repeating, and thus didn't find the strength and inspiration which was potentially prepared for them through the similarity of circumstance.

- Saul's vision of Jesus occurred with others present who didn't perceive vital parts of the vision- just as in the case of Daniel (Dan. 10:7).

- David's experience of having friends within the court of Saul prepared him for having friends within the court of Absalom, when both those men were hunting him (2 Sam. 15:35).

- Samuel as a child had to tell Eli of God's rejection of him, and replacement of him with someone else. This prepared Samuel for doing this very same thing years later, with Saul (1 Sam. 15:16); and to some extent, he too failed in ways similar to Eli, and was in a sense replaced. Whilst it's impossible to attach meaning to events at the time they happen, they potentially prepare us for later use by God if we are willing to be used.

- The Shunamite woman stood "in the door", i.e. on the threshold, when Elisha gave her the message that she would have a child (2 Kings 4:15). This was surely to help her see the similarities with Abraham and Sarah in the tent door, who were given the same message; and they like the Shunamite woman almost lost and then 'received back' the promised son.

- David was tested by God in the matter of sparing the life of his enemy Saul- and he came through the test with flying colours (1 Sam. 26). But soon afterwards, he was tested again in the same area in the matter of Nabal- and he initially failed, intent as he was to take the life of his enemy Nabal (1 Sam. 28). Thus a circumstance can repeat over a matter in which we were previously successful- and we can still fail that test.

- God gave a prophecy about Tyre the generation before Judah went into exile for 70 years. He said that Tyre would be forgotten for 70 years and then would be visited by Yahweh and revived (Is. 23:17). Surely this was in order to prepare those who had ears to hear to the fact that if God could operate like this with Tyre, how much more could He revive and "visit" His beloved people after 70 years.

- Especially do we find the essence of the Red Sea deliverance repeated in life after life, situation after situation, in Israel's history. This happens to the extent that some of the Psalms can speak as if we were there present; and Paul stresses how that passage through water remains a type of the baptism of every believer to this day (1 Cor. 10:1). Take for example how just as Yahweh confounded Israel's enemies at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24), so He did in Deborah's victory over Sisera (Jud. 4:15); and "not one was left" (Jud. 4:16), just as happened with the Egyptians (Ex. 14:28).

For other examples of repetition in Biblical narratives see 2 Kings 7:9,11,16; 2 Sam. 10:3 [cp. David sending his men to Nabal- but he doesn't learn the lesson this time]; 1 Chron. 7:22 [cp. Jacob being comforted by his sons over the loss of Joseph]; Benaiah killed a lion in order to prepare him for killing two lionlike men (1 Chron. 11:22); Peter, James and John were asleep at the transfiguration, but became "fully awake" and therefore beheld the Lord's glory (Lk. 9:32)- they feel asleep in Gethsemane, and didn't learn from the transfiguration experience.

An extended example of this repetition in Biblical narratives is to be found in the remarkable parallels between the sufferings of Stephen and the Lord Jesus, as tabulated by M. Ashton:

The Lord Jesus	Stephen
Acts 2:22	Acts 6:8
Luke 4:22	Acts 6:10
Mark 12:13	Acts 6:11
Luke 20:20	Acts 6:12
Matthew 26:59	Acts 6:13
Matthew 26:61	Acts 6:14
Matthew 26:65	Acts 6:11
Mark 15:20	Acts 7:57,58
Mark 14:62	Acts 7:56

Realizing, sensing how he was living out the sufferings of his Lord, all this really motivated Stephen; when he asked for forgiveness for his tormentors and asked for his spirit to be received (7:59,60), he was so evidently reflecting the words of the Lord in His time of final agony and spiritual and physical extension (Lk. 23:34,46). He saw the similarities between his sufferings and those of the Lord; and therefore he went ahead and let the spirit of the Lord Jesus live in him. He personalized those words of the Lord which he already well knew, and made them his own.

The record of Samson has a large number of these repetition in Biblical narrative. They are situations where he was connected into the experience of those who had gone before:

- Manoah's desire to detain the Angel (13:15 cp. 6:18; Gen. 18:5)
- " The child grew, and the Lord blessed him" (13:24 cp. Samuel, John, the Lord Jesus- all chosen from the womb)
- The disappointment of Samson's parents cp. that of Esau's (14:3 cp. Gen. 26:35; 27:46; 28:1)
- Judah also did wrong in Timnath (14:1) with a woman, and was deceived and shamed by her (15:1 = Gen. 38:17). Earlier Scripture, which it seems Samson well knew and appreciated, was crying out to Samson to take heed. But he was blind to the real import of it all.
- Samson slaying Philistines with a jawbone suggests Shamgar slaying Philistines with an ox goad (15:15 cp. 3:31).
- Samson dying of thirst crying desperately for water recalls Hagar's experience (15:19 cp. Gen. 21:19).
- Samson in a foreign city " compassed in" by his enemies recalls Paul (Acts 9:24), David (Ps. 118:10-12; 1 Sam. 23:26), the spies in Jericho .
- Samson suddenly called up out of the prison house (16:25) cp. Joseph (Gen. 41:14), John (Mt. 14:9).
- Gentiles praising their gods, mocking Yahweh, and then suddenly being destroyed (16:24) was a scene repeated in Dan. 5:4.

The Samson record seems to be framed to repeat the experiences of those who had gone before him: Job, Jacob and Gideon.

Relevance For Us

One can also recount such instances of repetition in the narratives of our own lives. Our experiences connect with those of Biblical characters- and thus the Biblical records become alive and intensely personal for each of us. Further, we see similarities in patterns and experiences between our lives and those of others contemporary with us. This is surely to enable the principle of 2 Cor. 1:4- that if we suffer anything, it is so that we can mediate comfort to those who suffer as we do. To go into our shells and not do this not only makes our own sufferings harder, but frustrates the very purpose of them. The repeating similarities between our lives and those of others also reveal to us that God at times arranges for us to suffer from our *alter ego*- persons who behave similarly to us, and who through those similarities cause us suffering. In this way we are taught the error of our ways, both past and present. It seems that Jacob the deceiver suffered in this way from Laban the deceiver- in order to teach him and cause his spiritual growth. For example, as Jacob deceived his blind father relating to an important family matter, so Laban deceived Jacob in the darkness of the wedding night. And Jacob learnt from this- whereas Laban [so it seems] just didn't "get it". Indeed, so many themes repeated in Jacob's life in order to teach him. For example, when he first meets Rachel, there are three other flocks of sheep waiting to be watered (Gen. 29:2); but the implication of Gen. 29:10 is that Jacob rolled away the stone from the well and watered

them and ignored the other three flocks. But did not this stone return upon his own head when God rolled away the reproach of the other three women in Jacob's life (Leah and the two servant girls) but not that of Rachel, who initially remained barren?

The repetition of circumstance in our lives is not only to teach us, but to make sure that we learnt the lesson- for what teacher doesn't give pupils exercises to practice the theory they've learnt? It seems that Joseph, acting on God's behalf and as a type of Christ, manipulated circumstances so that his brothers would have *deja vu* experiences. Thus he sets things up to tempt them with freedom if they again betray their younger brother (Benjamin) and are thoughtless to their father's pain. The united, frank and open response of the brothers (Gen. 44:13,16,17) showed how they had indeed learnt their lesson.

All this makes sense of how Biblical characters are indeed "types of us". Once we realize that our lives are being overruled to have similarities with *them*, then we come to Scripture with a far greater personal verve for understanding and insight. Ray Foster put it so well: "Typology is rather more than a matter of literary style: it is a re-calling or re-presentation of the past event so that it becomes a contemporary *kairos*, calling men into obedience and response *now*" (1). Supremely is all this relevant to the connections between our own experiences and those of the Lord Jesus. We see men like Paul having their lives moulded in order to fellowship with the sufferings of Christ (2). There were some aspects in which Paul had to chose to fill up what was still lacking of his experience of Christ's sufferings (Col. 1:24). But there were others in which Paul's life was set up by God as a reflection of Christ's- e.g. they were born within a year or so of each other, and it seems Paul also went into exile (in Tarsus) as a baby, fleeing persecution in Israel.

Notes

(1) R.S. Foster, *The Restoration of Israel* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970) p. 82.

(2) See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Jesus and Paul: Parallel Lives* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

5-2-2 Samson And Job

In the time of his humbling and mocking, in the wake of years of spiritual self-assurance, Job set such a clear prototype of Samson that Samson surely must have realized this, as he ground in the prison house. Job too suffered from blindness in his afflictions (Job 11:20; 17:5; 19:8; 30:12).

Job's last words

Job 30:1 mocked by youth

Job 30:6 The wicked dwell in the rocks

Job 30:9 " Now I am their song, yes, I am their byword"

Samson at his end

Judges 16:26

Judges 15:8

Judges 16:25

Job 30:11 " He hath loosed my cord and afflicted me"

In Judges 16:8 the same word is used of the cords with which Samson was bound, and which the Philistines loosed. Only a few weeks later (?) God was afflicting him through Delilah (16:19)

Job 30:12 " Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet...they mar my path, they set forward my calamity" . This indicates Job's poor eyesight and how the youth abused him.

This is exactly what happened to Samson. The lad made him dance, according to Jewish tradition, by poking Samson with sticks (16:25,26)

Job 30:17 " My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest" .

Both Samson and Job came to fellowship something of the Lord's future cross: the unnatural darkness, the pierced bones, the constant ache of sinews: as Samson ground and danced, and as the Lord heaved Himself up and down on His sinews to breathe.

Job 30:19 " He hath cast me into the mire (sometimes an idiom for prison), and I am become like dust and ashes" .

As Samson in prison came to be like an ordinary man (dust and ashes; 16:11).

Job 30:20 " I cry unto thee...I stand up"

Samson cried to Yahweh, standing up (16:28)

Job 30:24 " Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave"

Samson likewise would have come to the hope of personal resurrection.

According to Samson's appreciation of these links, so he would have reaped encouragement and hope. Job's last words were followed by a final humbling, and then the glorious justification of himself and the judgment of his enemies, to culminate in his future resurrection. One hopes that Samson saw the point and grasped hold of the hope offered (consider how the Lord's words to Peter in Jn. 21:13 would have offered him tremendous comfort in Acts 12:8, if he appreciated them).

And this is not all. There were other words in Job which would have so comforted Samson at the end: " Behold, God is strong...he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous...and if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity...but the hypocrites in heart...*cry not* (as Samson did) when he bindeth them" (Job 36:5-13).

5-2-3 Samson And Gideon

Manoah's desire to detain the Angel and offer sacrifice (13:15) was exactly that of Gideon (6:18). His belief after he had seen the Angel ascend (13:20 = 6:21), and his subsequent fear, were again expressed in the words of Gideon (13:21,22 cp. 6:22). As Gideon was, perhaps subconsciously, the hero of Manoah, so Samson followed his father's spirituality in this. It seems he lived out parental expectation, and imbibed the spirituality of his father without making it his own. Born and raised believers, beware.

As the Spirit came upon Gideon (6:34), so it is described as coming upon Samson (14:6). It seems that the incident in ch. 15, where Samson visits his wife with a kid and uses this as an excuse to kill many Philistines, was planned by him to reflect Gideon's zeal. The way Gideon brought a kid to Yahweh (6:19) may reflect how Samson came with a kid (15:1). He then takes 300 foxes and puts firebrands in their tails. Why 300? Surely this was in conscious imitation of how Gideon took 300 men and put firebrands in their hands, and with them destroyed God's enemies (7:16). The connection between the faithful 300 and the foxes could suggest that in Samson's eyes, he didn't even have one faithful Israelite to support him; he had to use animals instead. It may be that as Gideon "went down" to destroy God's enemies (7:9), so Samson justified his 'going down' to the Philistines to take their women, as well as to destroy their warriors (14:1,5,7,10). As Gideon was somehow 'separate from his brethren' in his zeal, so was Samson. And yet Samson seems to have copied just the externalities of Gideon ⁽⁴⁾; not the real spirit. And therefore as Gideon foolishly multiplied women to himself in the spiritual weakness of his middle age, so perhaps Samson saw justification for his attitude. 'If heroic Gideon could indulge the flesh in this area, I surely can'. He fell into our common trap: to compare ourselves amongst ourselves, to measure ourselves against human standards as we find them among the contemporary brotherhood (2 Cor. 10:12). Saul should have realized that Samson, like him, idolized Gideon, but only on a surface level- and should have taken the lesson. But he didn't see the points we've made in this paragraph. He could have done, but he didn't bother. And so with us. The word supplies us the potential power to overcome. It can often happen that the daily readings are almost purpose-designed for our present situation. Yet if we neglect to read them- that help lies untapped.

When Samson decided to attack Gaza by going into a harlot's house, he may have been consciously imitating the way the spies played their part in Jericho's destruction (16:1). And yet it was once again only a surface imitation. He fell for the 'little of both' syndrome, justifying it under the guise of Scriptural examples. He had done this in his youth; he "went down" to take a Philistine girl for wife (14:1,5,7,10); and yet by doing so he was seeking an opportunity to slay Philistines. He may well have had in mind the sustained emphasis on the fact that Gideon went *down* to destroy the Midianites (Jud. 7:9,10,11,24). He went down morally and physically, and yet he justified this by thinking that as Gideon went down physically, so would he. Such is the complexity of the process of temptation. And all this is written for our learning. Significantly, the major temptations within the Lord's mind- as far as we can tell from the record of the wilderness temptations- was to misinterpret Scripture to His own ends; to soften the cross.

Jacob

"Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (13:18) is exactly the Angelic words to Jacob (Gen. 32:29). Their subsequent fear (13:22), cp. Gen. 32:20. The seven day marriage feast, associated with a deceitful father in law offering the sister of the desired bride

in marriage (14:12), this is all the same as Jacob experienced (Gen. 29:27)- right down to the fact that the younger sister was fairer (15:2 cp. Gen. 29:16,17). Samson should have learnt from the evident similarities with Jacob; but like Jacob, still trusted his own strength.

Notes

(1) Saul did the same when he prohibited the men to eat anything while they were pursuing the Philistines (1 Sam. 11:11 = Jud. 7:16; 1 Sam. 13:5 = Jud. 7:12; 1 Sam. 14:24,28,31 = Jud. 8:4,5). He may have followed Samson's weak side when at this same time he demanded to be avenged of his enemies (1 Sam. 14:24); yet this wasn't Samson at his best (15:7; 16:28). See too *Devotion: A Caveat* for more discussion of this tendency.

5-2-4 Samson And Solomon

Solomon was evidently fascinated by Samson. His writings contain many allusions to him. Thus he speaks of how he found " more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares, and her hands as bands (" fetters" , RSV): whoso pleaseth God shall escape her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26). His constant warnings about the danger of the Gentile (AV " strange") woman are all commands to learn from the example of Samson. All these passages allude to Samson (e.g. 5:20; 6:26-28; 7:21-27). Often the Proverbs allude to characters in Israel's history. The references to a wise son rejoicing his father and mother (Prov. 23:25) and saddening them by his folly shout for application to Samson. The warnings about not *looking* at a strange woman recall how Samson *saw* the Philistine girl in Timnath and the prostitute in Gaza (14:1; 16:1). The wicked woman lying in wait to kill the simple man (Prov. 23:25-27) is a clear enough reference to Delilah and her henchmen lying in wait in the bedroom. And yet, for all this reflection upon Samson, Solomon went and did *par excellence* according to Samson's well-studied folly. And we can do the same, in principle. There is this vast distance between knowledge and belief.

There is an undoubted connection between the record of Solomon *catching the foxes* and using them to destroy *vineyards* (15:4,5) and Song 2:15, where Solomon suggests that he and his girl go and catch the foxes that destroy the vineyards. He seems to have had Samson in mind. And yet both he and his Gentile girlfriend owned vineyards (Song 1:6; 8:11,12), and both were concerned that the fruit would not be damaged (Song 2:13,15; 6:11; 7:12). However, the implication from Solomon's maybe careless allusion was that in fact he was in the position of the Philistines, worrying about the effect of Samson's foxes.

There is further comment on Samson and Solomon in [Samson And Delilah](#).

Not only do circumstances repeat between the lives of God's children, but also within our lives. We may pass through a very similar experience more than once. The human chances of this ever happening again were remote. But the similarity and repetition may be so that we learn the lesson we failed to learn; or it could even be a punishment for not learning the lessons we should have learned. Again, Samson's life demonstrates this. The lion roared against him as the Philistines did (14:5 s.w. 15:14); and not least in the uncanny similarities between the way his first wife enticed him and wrung his secrets from him, and the way 40 years later another worthless woman did the same to him (14:15-17 = 16:5,15,16). He just didn't see the similarities, or if he did, he didn't learn any lessons. Admittedly, it's far easier for us, presented with the records as they are, spanning 40 years within a few pages.

5-2-5 Samson And David

The point of all this is that God intends us to make character studies of those He has carefully recorded in the word. And that doesn't only mean at Bible Schools. Job, Samson, Jacob...these men must live in our lives and meditation, to the end we may find the spirit of the Lord Himself in our daily experience. Samson is one of those whose record is evidently designed for meditation. This is why there are so many open ended questions of interpretation of his actions and character- e.g., as to whether he was justified in seeking a Philistine wife as part of seeking an occasion against the Philistines. There is no lack of evidence that later Bible characters found inspiration in Samson, especially in their weakness. Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:12,13 = Jud. 16:19,28); Jeremiah (commented on in *Samson: General Introduction*), Nehemiah (16:28 = Neh. 13:22,31), and not least David, another zealot with middle age lust problems (Ps. 118:10-12 = Jud. 16:2). The Spirit came on David as it did on Samson (1 Sam. 16:13); they were both empowered to kill lions, whilst keeping the fact a secret. And in both those acts they were taught that they would deliver God's people from the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:34-37). Indeed, David's confident words that God would deliver him from the Philistines were evidently inspired by Samson, the renowned one-man deliverer from Philistine armies. Both Samson and David wrought " great salvation" for Israel (1 Sam. 19:5 cp. Jud. 15:18). As Samson was characterized by his love of that riddle (the word occurs nine times in 14:12-19, and 15:16 Heb. is also some kind of riddle), so David uses the same word to describe how he chose to put forth a riddle (Ps. 78:2). Psalm 3 is full of reference to Samson's fight at Lehi. It was also written at a time when David was betrayed by his own people:

" Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him'" - the thoughts of the Israelites as they delivered the bound Samson to the Philistines

" But you are a shield around me" - how it must have seemed to a spectator

" To the Lord I cry aloud" - as Samson did

" I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me" - huge armies against one solitary man is a clear reference to Samson at Lehi

" Strike all my enemies the jaw bone" (Ps. 3:7 Heb.)- it could imply 'with the jaw bone'. The Hebrew for 'jaw bone' is the same as in Jud. 15:16.

5.3 Samson's Marriage (Judges 14:1 - 15:8)

The whole question of Samson's marriage is overshadowed by the fact that " It was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines" (14:4); He used this incident to begin to raise up Samson as a Judge of Israel (2:16,18; 1 Chron. 17:10). This is surely one of Scripture's purposeful ambiguities, designed to provoke us to meditation: it is unclear whether " he" refers to Samson or Yahweh. There are a number of other passages which mention how " it was of the Lord" that certain attitudes were adopted by men, resulting in the sequence of events which He desired (Dt. 2:39; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 1 Kings 12:15; 2 Chron. 10:15; 22:7; 25:20). It is tempting to read 14:4 in this context, meaning that God somehow made Samson desire that woman in order to bring about His purpose of freeing Israel from Philistine domination. And yet this would require that God almost made Samson have a desire for that woman. This may not be impossible- it may be that Paul's God-given "

thorn in the flesh" was a similar forbidden passion. It would be an example of God leading into temptation (Mt. 6:13). However, it is more likely that God worked through Samson's wrong desires, through his human weakness, to bring about God's purpose and glory.

Samson's Aim

The context of Samson's marriage does seem to suggest that Samson himself sought occasion against the Philistines; for the Spirit of the Lord had been troubling his conscience as to why the people of Dan had not followed up Joshua's victories, and had allowed themselves to be overrun by the uncircumcised (13:25 Heb.). The only other references to "troubled" are in Gen. 41:8; Ps. 77:4; Dan. 2:1,3. The Spirit of God worked with Samson's spirit, so that it was troubled as he went for his solitary walks of meditation. It was no accident that he was buried in the very place where his conscience was first awakened (16:31); he maybe asked for this burial place, to show he had at last returned to his innocent spiritual beginnings. He is described as wanting to "take" a wife; this Hebrew word is 51 times translated 'take away', 31 times 'fetch'. He evidently didn't intend to live there with her; he wanted her to come and live with him in the Israelite encampment, four miles up in the hills from the valley where she lived. She was 'right in his eyes' (14:3 AVmg.) not for beauty but in the sense that 'she suits my purpose' (Heb.). The same Hebrew is used not concerning beauty but rather utility in 1 Sam. 18:20; 2 Sam. 17:4; 1 Kings 9:12. The way in which Samson set up the riddle, almost expecting that they might tease it out of him through his wife, the way in which he agreed that if they did this, he would give them the clothes of 30 Philistines... it all suggests that Samson set the whole thing up to seek an opportunity against the Philistines. They had to declare the riddle "and find it out" (15:12). This would indicate that they had to actually find the carcass of a lion with honey in it. They plowed behind his wife as a heifer, and so were led by her to Samson's secret place of meditation where the dead lion was (15:18). He speaks to his wife as if she should expect that he was closer to his Hebrew parents than to her: "I haven't even explained it (the riddle) to my father or mother", he replied, 'So why should I explain it to you?' (15:16 NIV). Gen. 2:24 taught that a man must leave his parents and cleave to his wife in marriage; she must be closer to him than them. It could be that by saying this, Samson was reminding her that he didn't see their relationship as full marriage; he was only using her (cp. how he 'used' a Philistine as his best man, 14:20). Yet he did what only days before had been unthinkable: he told her his finest and most personal secret, which he wouldn't even tell his dear parents. Such is the fickleness of our nature. And yet there seems reason to think that somehow Samson foresaw his possible failure, and arranged to use the situation to forward God's work. It could even be that the girl was party to Samson's plan; she may have appeared to have a genuine interest in Samson's spiritual aims. The Philistines themselves realized this when they chode with Samson's wife that they had been called to the wedding 'to have our possession taken away' (14:15 Heb.). They saw the aim of Samson's marriage: to dispossess them and take their possession for Israel. It seems no accident that he chose Timnath, 'a portion assigned'- to Israel. This was part of the land promised to Dan, but which they had allowed the Philistines to overrun (Josh. 19:43,47). And Samson would have seen himself as 'Samson-of-Zorah', the hornet- symbol of the Egyptian tribes which drove out the Canaanites in preparation for Israel's later victories (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12). We get the picture of Samson and his parents walking the four miles down into the valley, and Samson goes off for a wander in the vineyards. The vineyard was a symbol of Israel (Ps. 80:15; Is. 1:8; 5:7; 27:2; Jer. 12:10; Mt. 21:41). This may have been already evident to Samson from Gen. 49:11; although most likely the symbol of Israel as God's vineyard was already established by his time. Conscious that Timnath was the 'portion assigned' to Dan and yet they had failed, Samson meditates there in the vineyards, a symbol of Israel, the people who

should have been there. Inheriting Philistine vineyards was one of the blessings promised (Dt. 6:11) and initially obtained by Joshua-Jesus (Josh. 24:13). And yet those vineyards were now back in Philistine control. A lion suddenly appeared and roared against him (14:5), just as the Philistines later would (15:14). The lion was a common symbol of Israel's enemies. The Spirit came upon Samson and he overcame it, in evident symbol to him that he really could deliver Israel from the Philistines. There is every reason to think that Samson appreciated all this symbology. And yet did Samson ultimately slay the lion of the Philistines and bring the promised blessings of honey to Israel (cp. Ex. 3:8; Dt. 8:8 etc.)? No, not really. He achieved some tokenistic success against their warriors; but Israel remained enslaved (15:20). He didn't live up to that potential which God had enabled him to achieve. And yet although it may seem that his life was wasted, in that he didn't really bring much deliverance for anyone- the whole process of it saved him personally. Those whose families and converts have turned away from the Faith will identify with this comfort.

However, it must be recognized that God did in fact send the lion against Samson. He did this in order to go along with Samson's symbolic thoughts, and this may afford some justification for Samson's marriage. He was there, wandering in those vineyards, meditating how they were representative of the blessings which belonged to Israel, and yet they were now in the hands of God's enemies. And then, God furthers the parable: He sends a lion, symbolic of the Philistines, and Samson is given power to overcome him. And further, when Samson returned to the carcass to meditate deeper on 'the fallen one' (14:8 doesn't use the usual word for 'carcass'- s.w. " fall" Prov. 29:16; Ez. 26:15; 27:27; 31:13), " behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion" (14:8). The Hebrew for " swarm" is normally used (124 times) about a congregation of people, often God's people Israel. And the Hebrew for 'Bee' is 'Deborah', a celebrated earlier judge. God was surely teaching him that through his victory over the Philistine lion, God's people would be inspired to be faithful, and would therefore be able to enjoy the promised blessing of honey, taken out of the Philistines. Samson saw all this; for he " took" (Heb. is usually used in the sense of 'to take dominion over') the honey, partook himself, and shared it with others. In all this there is a detailed type of the Lord's representative sacrifice on the cross. On the cross, He won the victory over the lion of the devil (1 Pet. 5:8 cp. Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8 may allude to Samson's victory). This enabled us to be empowered to partake the Kingdom blessings. As Samson walked away from the carcass some days after killing it (14:8 Heb. " a time" = 'days'- three days?), with the honey in his hands, eating it and offering it to others, so the Lord left the empty tomb. The way he ate and gave to his parents and *they also ate* without him telling them where he got it from (14:9) is a clear reversal of what happened in Eden (Gen. 3:6; doubtless Eve didn't tell Adam either where the fruit came from): but here the fruits of spiritual victory rather than failure were enjoyed and shared. The promised blessings of honey were conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 32:13 cp. Ps. 81:16), although granted in prospect (Dt. 32:13). Israel at Samson's time were disobedient and therefore didn't have the Kingdom blessings. And yet the whole acted parable taught that through the supreme zeal of one lonely man, into whose struggle not even his parents could enter (14:6,16), the blessings of obedience could be brought to the disobedient multitude of God's people. And here we have the essence of the Gospel.

And Samson knew all this, rising up to an anticipation of the Gospel which few in the OT must have reached. This allows us to view Samson's marriage more positively. He went down to the valley of Ashkelon, the very place that Joshua had conquered but Judah had been unable to drive out the Philistines from (1:18,19), and slew 30 warriors. And then later he used the whole situation as an opportunity to burn up the corn and vineyards of the Philistines

(15:5), in conscious allusion to how the law stipulated that a man who did this to his Israelite neighbour must make retribution (Ex. 22:5). He was emphasizing that these people were *not* his neighbours, they were not in covenant relationship, and he openly showed that he treated them accordingly. Likewise he took vengeance on the Philistines (15:5; 16:28), when the Law taught that Israel were not to take vengeance (same word) *on each other* (Lev. 19:18), but could do so on their enemies (Num. 31:2; Dt. 32:43 cp. Josh. 10:13). Note, in passing, how he set those foxes up as cherubim- a ball of whirling fire coming in judgment upon the Philistines. The fox was a symbol of apostate Israel in later Scripture (Ez. 13:4); perhaps Samson made the same connection, and wanted to symbolize how through his faith and insight, weak Israel could be turned into the cherubim of God in bringing judgment on the Philistines and deliverance for themselves. The way he used their tails to bring such destruction may have been a reference to Dt. 28:13,44, where apostate Israel, suffering for their sins as they were in Samson's time, are described with the same word: they would be the tail of the nations. He saw that he was the one who could bring salvation and blessing to Israel. His riddle spoke of how " Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (14:14). " The eater" (Heb. 'the devourer') and " the strong" not only referred to the lion, but more essentially to Samson himself. The same basic word for 'eater' is used as a verb to describe how Samson 'ate' / 'devoured' the honey from the lion (14:9). And years later the Philistines realized how Samson's riddle described himself: for they rejoiced that " the destroyer (devourer) of our country" was now overcome (16:24). Samson saw that through his God-given strength he could bring forth the honey of blessing to Israel.

And yet although this was what was possible, Samson never fulfilled it. He never quite killed the lion, and therefore God's people at this time lived under the Philistine yoke throughout his life (15:20), never enjoying the blessings which were potentially possible. Places like Zorah and Eshtaol are associated again with apostasy and Philistine domination (18:2,8,11; 2 Chron. 28:18). Samson was but a blip on the screen of general failure and unspirituality in the Israel of God. And yet although Samson limited God in saving Israel, through it all, he himself was saved (yet so as by fire).

Mixed Motives

But whilst the above case for Samson's spiritual commitment can be made, there is evidence galore that his motives were mixed in this matter of Samson's marriage. Consider: why did he as a Nazarite go for a walk in vineyards, among the forbidden fruit (cp. Christians in demanding careers, watching television, reading novels...)? This was typical of him: a great zeal and understanding, mixed with a desire to walk as close to the edge as possible, and to ultimately have a little of both. He had a fascination with vineyards, which the record brings out. Like an ex-alcoholic staring at the bottles in the shop 'just out of interest', so Samson fooled about with what was forbidden- just as we all tend to. He later teased Delilah to tie him with seven "withs", the Hebrew word implying made from a vine. He just would mess with the forbidden. The way he burnt up those vineyards in 15:5 may have been as a result of realizing that the answer lay in total devotion and rooting out of temptation; cutting out the eye that offends. He burnt those vineyards in a desire to be " blameless from the Philistines" (15:3 AVmg.). The same word is translated unpunished, guiltless, innocent, clean, acquitted; as if he knew he had sinned, but believed that by further fighting of Philistines he could gain his forgiveness. He had to be brought to the shame of Gaza Prison to learn that forgiveness was by absolute faith, not works and hatred of this present world. He seems angry that he had let himself fall too deeply for that Philistine girl (14:19), and " utterly hated her" (15:2). And yet this human anger may also have been mixed with a more righteous anger, in that to give

his wife to another was adultery, and it happened that they carried out (perhaps unconsciously?) the punishment for adultery which the law required (Lev 20:14; 21:9). He realized that the Philistines had led him into sin, and he just wanted to destroy the source of his temptation. And yet he then lost that good conscience; he smote the Philistines hip and thigh with a great slaughter, alluding to the sacrifices (s.w. "shoulder" Ex. 29:22; Lev. 9:21; 1 Sam. 9:24; Ez. 24:4- nearly all usages of this word in Samson's Bible referred to the "shoulder" of the sacrifices), as if he was offering them as a sacrifice to Yahweh; and then "went down (again!!) and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam" (15:8). You don't go down if you are going up to the top of a rock. But perhaps spiritually he 'went down', to dwell in isolation from the people he was supposed to be judging / leading, in the rocks. Dwelling in the rocks is associated with a bad conscience in Is. 2:21 and 57:5. Yet for all this, God counted him as having judged Israel 20 years at this stage (15:20); even though there was this evident break when he simply ran away from his people. The way they tie him up and he begs them not to kill him (15:12,13) hardly sounds like Samson judging them. And yet this was his desire, and this is what God imputed to him (15:20), in the same way as he was a Nazarite to God (i.e. in God's eyes?) all his life (13:7)- although he broke his Nazariteship by contact with dead bodies (14:19; 15:15 cp. Num. 6:6) ⁽¹⁾and probably by drinking wine at his wedding (14:10 "feast" = 'drinking', Heb.). This was not only imputed righteousness, but God counting the essential intentions of a weak willed man to him as if he had actually achieved what he fain would do.

So Samson had a mixed conscience when he slew the lion. He was in the vineyards, the very place where he shouldn't have been as a Nazarite, although he justified it by spiritual and even Biblical reasoning. He then burns up those vineyards in order to have a blameless conscience. He then loses that good conscience and cowers in the rocks. And then later he goes to the valley of Sorek (Heb. 'the vine') and forges a relationship with another worthless woman (16:4). Samson's marriage looks less acceptable in this context. So he returned to his old desire to walk near the forbidden fruit. His purges of conscience were temporary, and he returned to the old haunts and ways. When he slew the thirty men at Ashkelon, as he seemed to have planned right at the start in his seeking occasion against the Philistines, he was "burning with anger" (14:19 NIV). His motive was partly bitterness and the revenge of a man humiliated and deceived by a woman; but his slaughter of the Philistines was also done in faith (Heb. 11:32-34), with God given strength to confirm his faith. And yet in the days leading up to this, as "she cried the whole seven days of the feast" (14:17 NIV), she daily "pressed him" (14:17). This is the very same Hebrew word used in many passages to describe how an apostate, Gentile-loving Israel would be pressed / oppressed by their enemies (Dt. 28:53,57; Jer. 19:9; Is. 51:13). Samson was in some sense apostate at this time, yet he had faith and was strongly motivated; and for this he was blessed by God with strength to defeat the Philistines. The daughters of the Philistines *hate* God's people (2 Sam. 1:20; Ez. 16:27,57). The Ezekiel passages stress the paradox: that Israel (whom Samson represented) loved the women who hated them. And yet Samson also despised the uncircumcised Philistines (15:18), as he had been brought up to (14:3). He knew they hated him and yet he loved them and yet he hated them- all this shows the complexity of human nature, and describes our attitude to the world and the things of the flesh. And yet the only real answer is to *cut off* the flesh; to gouge out the eye that offends; not to comfortably go along with the fact that we have such a love:hate relationship with the flesh. For we cannot serve two masters; we can only ultimately love one. The Lord we serve is in many ways a demanding Lord.

Samson's marriage reflects a spiritual brinkmanship which was his spiritual undoing, however. For the same word is used concerning how Delilah later vexed him unto death with her words (16:16), and then Samson rose up and slew the Philistines with God's help. The same word is used concerning how the Gentile enemies of an apostate Israel would afflict them (Dt. 28:53,55,57). Yet at this very same time, Samson had faith. But there came a time- there had to come a time, for the sake of Samson's eternal salvation- when this having a little of both had to be ended.

We surely all feel an identity with this. And yet his situation was serious; we know the final terrible humiliation it resulted in. And our position is likewise serious. No wonder the Lord taught us of gouging out eyes (a Samson allusion?), and Paul speaks of putting to death the passions of flesh. There is no other way. The old nature will be destroyed at judgment day, so we might as well destroy it now. God will vindicate Himself against sin in us; if we go through the putting-to-death process now, then there will be the eternity of the Kingdom in God's nature. If we don't, God will put it to death for us in the process of destruction which will follow judgment- and we will die eternally. There is a powerful, powerful logic in this, if only we would apprehend it.

The Lust Of The Flesh

Samson really loved that girl (14:3,17; 15:1,7,11), even though he also hated her (15:2; he must have gone through this process again with Delilah in the time that led up to her final betrayal). This true love for her makes Samson's marriages look more questionable. When Samson "smote the Philistines hip and thigh" and burnt up their corn, he commented that "as they did unto me, so have I done unto them" (15:11). If we ask 'What exactly did they do to him? What did they kill and burn of his?', the answer must be 'His wife'. He perhaps felt that she was worth hundreds of them, and the burning of their livelihood, leaving famine in its wake, was what they had done to him emotionally. Yet it is curious how he loved the Philistines and yet hated them. She is described as a "woman" (14:7), using a word which means an older, married woman (s.w. 14:15 "wife") rather than a maiden. She had seen something of life, and therefore the fact Samson loved her suggests that it was a serious relationship. His action was quite contrary to the spirit of the Law: that marriage with the local tribes was categorically prohibited (Ex. 34:16; Dt. 7:3,4; 1 Kings 11:2). Joshua's warning that those who married the surrounding tribes would find them "a snare and a trap for you... thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12,13 RSV) was fulfilled in Samson being tied up and blinded by Delilah; and yet it also had an element of fulfillment with his wife. The similarity is such as to suggest that Samson's marriage out of the Truth was definitely wrong because it was a fulfillment of the words of Josh. 23. "Is there *never* a woman among the daughters of thy brethren...that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" (14:3) implies that she wasn't the first one; he had often got involved with Philistine girls down in the valley, despite his conscience for Yahweh troubling him as he walked alone on the heights (13:25 Heb.) ⁽²⁾. Samson gave no good answer to his parents: simply "Get her for me; for she is right in mine eyes" (14:3, repeated in 14:7 for emphasis- he really did fall for the lust of the eyes). This insistence rather than explanation would suggest a bad conscience in Samson. Likewise he crowd only shouted out the more when asked why and for what crime they wished to crucify Jesus (Mt. 27:23). The process of marriage involved Samson in participating in the traditions of the surrounding tribes (this is emphasized: 14:10,11; 15:20). The "feasting" was strictly 'drinking' (Heb.)- and Samson the Nazarite attended this. Even if he didn't partake, he was placing himself directly in temptations' way.

It is emphasized that Samson "went *down*" to her (14:1,5,7,10), as if his literal descent to her in the valley was also a retrograde step spiritually. Samson's marriage was wrong. And so it was. And yet his hero Gideon (see *Samson And Deja Vu*) had likewise 'gone down', the record emphasizes, to liberate Israel from their enemies (7:9,10,11,24). In view of the other examples of Samson consciously imitating Gideon, it is likely that he was seeking an opportunity to deliver Israel from the Philistines. And yet he mixed his motivations. He loved the girl, he wanted to gratify his flesh with the forbidden fruit. He loved the world, and thereby became in some sense an enemy of God (James 4:4). But then he loved Gideon, he loved the holiness of Yahweh, he hated the world and the Philistines, he loved Israel, weak as they were, and wanted to deliver them from their spiritual bondage. And instead of casting him off as a man of such divided heart that he was not worthy of God's covenant love, God worked with him. And by using a purposeful ambiguity, He has recorded this for us in such a way as unites God's desire for Israel's deliverance with that of Samson: "It was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines" (14:4). The "he" can be read as both God and Samson; they both had the same desire, and God worked with mixed up Samson to this end. Working all this out from the evidence presented in the record is hard work. The fact a man does something "of the Lord" doesn't mean that he is guiltless. In the same context of God's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, men who did things "of the Lord" were punished for what they did (Dt. 2:30; 1 Sam. 2:25; 2 Chron. 22:7; 25:20).

All this may seem a quagmire of evidence that it is almost impossible to put in place and reach a fair conclusion as to Samson's spiritual motivation in the matter of Samson's marriage. And yet the complexity of Samson is only a reflection of the complexity of our own failures; every failure is the result of a long process of complex desire and counter-desire, with the flesh winning the day under cover of some kind of spirituality. God responded to the complexity of Samson's spirituality by the complexity of His dealings with him and Israel. He delivered Israel to the hand of the Philistines during the forty years of Samson's judgeship (13:1), and yet through Samson He also delivered Israel out of their hand (2:16,18). Yet God only "*began to deliver*" them through Samson (13:5), although the potential was there for total deliverance (2:16,18). God worked both for and against Israel at this time, in reflection of how Samson their intended Saviour had a similar struggle between the Spirit and flesh, never completely coming down on the side of either. And so often we are like Samson; we never completely lose faith, like Israel we eat the bread of Heaven daily and yet rise up and worship our golden calf as part of a supposed service of Yahweh. We can serve God and mammon, even though from the Lord's perspective actually we only serve mammon. And yet we can drift on like this for years. It lead Samson to be eyeless in Gaza in his 60s, and only then did he learn. We may fail that kind of final, desperate attempt to reform us. Samson is written for our learning. Total commitment is the answer, the only answer; cutting off the flesh, putting it to death, living out day by day the process we went through at baptism.

The Nudges Of God

The record of Samson shows God nudging him time and again, and Samson taking no notice; God flashing red lights, and Samson time and again driving through them. The way that Delilah betrays him regarding his hair is perhaps the most poignant example; but actually it's a theme throughout Samson's life. The incident of Samson and the slain lion, and honey forming in the carcase, must surely have had point and purpose. The record isn't there simply to pad out a story. Samson discovered a congregation (Heb. '*edat*') of bees- *deborim* , in Hebrew. The judge Deborah would've been fairly recent history for Samson; she would have

been the heroine of anyone like Samson, who also arose to save Israel from their enemies at that time. Surely he was being gently led to reflect that there were a whole congregation of Deborahs ['bees'] around, and he should eat of them. And yet Samson went his loner road, and suffered the consequences of it- rather like Elijah, who was in denial of the fact there were actually at least another 7000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Or perhaps Samson was simply being asked to execute his deliverance of Israel after the pattern of Deborah, to 'eat' of her, to fellowship her example and spirit. But he chose not to 'get it'; as we so often do in the countless nudges and prods which God gives us in daily life.

Notes

(1) " Hip on thigh" is apparently a better rendering, implying hand to hand combat. This would serve to emphasize his contact with the dead bodies, as he hurled them to the ground one by one. And yet the Spirit of Yahweh came upon him to enable this- a breach of the letter of the Nazarite law.

(2) " Is there *never* a woman among the daughters of thy brethren" (14:3) could mean that Samson had a number of relationships with Israelite girls but never hit it off with any of them. This may have been because he was a spiritual man in the midst of a sadly apostate Israel. "...among the daughters of *thy brethren*" could suggest that Samson was a generation above the marriageable girls. Does this imply Samson stayed single for the Lord? The incident relating to Samson's marriage could have happened at any time during the first 20 years in which he judged Israel (15:20).

5.4 Samson At Lehi (Judges 15:9 - 20)

In this incident of Samson at Lehi we have many of the themes of Samson's life epitomized. Samson's spiritual strength was once again somewhat weak. He says that he had killed Philistines because " I merely did to them what they did to me" (15:11 NIV). There was no mention of the fact that he was seeking occasion against God's enemies (even though he was speaking to Hebrews). He passed off his actions as pure revenge- which on one level, was all they were. The Philistines had earlier said that they wanted to take Samson " to do to him as he did to us" (15:10). And Samson replies in the same primitive way: that he only did to them what they did to him. It seems that Samson spoke to them on their level. And yet when the Philistines came upon Samson, roaring against him like the lion in 14:5, God's Spirit once again came upon him in confirmation of his faith. Israel at this time were evidently unspiritual; hence they were dominated by the Philistines (15:12). The way they came to bind Samson has suggestions of Legion (Lk. 8:29); perhaps they considered him to be mentally ill, and attributed his strength to fits? Or worse, did they consider the work of the Spirit of God to deliver them to be that of demons? If so, Samson was typifying the Lord's later experience (Mt. 12:24-27). The way Jesus spoke of himself in this context as the stronger than the strong man (cp. Samson) encourages this view. And yet the strong man who was bound, i.e. the devil, can also be seen as a reference to Samson. Again, we are left with a difficult question: Was Samson telling them the truth when he said that his motive at Lehi was purely personal revenge? Or were they so unspiritual that he spoke to them on their level, even though at other times he pleaded with them to quit their idolatry (2:16-19)? Or were his motives simply hopelessly mixed? Within him was a burning desire to do God's work; he was the one faithful Israelite who could chase 1,000; and yet in the company of his unspiritual brethren, he let his human side come out, and wrapped up his zeal for the Lord in human terms- even though there was some truth in how he expressed it. This kind of thing can so easily happen in our Christian experience; we bring out the worst in each other.

And yet despite such cruel rejection at the hands of his weak brethren, there is reason to think that Samson was not just out for personal glory when he slew those thousand men. Samson grabbed a jaw-bone and exalted that with *that* he had slain a thousand men at Lehi. This was

a conscious allusion to Josh. 23:10 (and Lev. 26:8): " One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, He it is that fighteth for you" . It could be that he counted the bodies, or counted each man he slew, consciously trying to get up to 1,000 in order to fulfill the prophecy. Samson doesn't say that he alone killed the thousand men; he did it with the jaw-bone (coming from a Hebrew root meaning 'soft', 'weak'). It has been pointed out that this jaw bone is one of the seven weak things which are mentioned in Judges as being the tools of God's salvation: left handed man (3:21); an ox goad (3:31); a woman (4:4); a nail (4:21); a piece of a millstone (9:53); a pitcher and trumpet (7:20). God's people are likened to an ass frequently (Gen. 49:11,14; Is. 1:3; Jer. 2:24; Hos. 8:9; Lk. 13:15; 14:5). The first two references would have been known to Samson at Lehi; and he may have reflected that the fact the firstborn of an ass must be redeemed by a lamb was prophetic of how Messiah would save all His otherwise condemned people (Ex. 13:13; 34:20). Could it not be that despite their cruel betrayal of him and utter faithlessness, dear Samson felt he was living out a kind of acted parable of what was possible for Israel: that through his zeal, and in his hands, the weak people of God could achieve the great victory over thousands which Moses and Joshua had earlier foretold? In this he was a superb type of the Lord.

In the actual slaughter of the Philistines at Timnath, we are again left with questions as to the pureness of Samson's motives. His request for water in that dry place was abundantly answered- in the same way as Yahweh had responded to exactly the same request from a faithless Israel in the desert (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:2-13). And the way he names the well after the miraculous provision of water, and the way presumably the opened well remained (15:19), has links with pseudo-Israelite Hagar (Gen. 16:19). And yet even in these similarities, it must be noted that there was a certain spiritual culture in Samson's prayer. He didn't make a direct, crude demand for water. He placed his situation before God, and left it to Him to respond as He knew best. This is a feature of many spiritual prayers: not to crudely, directly ask for the obvious; but to simply inform the Almighty of the situation, in faith ⁽¹⁾. Samson's victory song at Lehi smacks of personal vengeance: there is little suggestion of the humble servant merely doing God's will:

" With a donkey's jaw-bone

I have made donkeys of them.

With a donkey's jaw-bone

I have killed a thousand men"

(15:16 NIV).

Samson at Lehi saw them as unclean asses; and yet he loved their women. And yet in the midst of this almost arrogance, he cries: " I thirst" , and so exhibits something of the spirit of Christ in His final hour of agony and ultimate conquest on the cross (Jn. 19:28). And yet again, it must be considered that the Lord's words there must be read in the context of His other Johanne references to thirst (Jn. 4:14,15; 6:35). He was expressing the spiritual thirst He felt, as a man on the brink of the ultimate spiritual failure, and saw this expressed in the literal desire He had for moisture. On the cross He was the root out of the dry ground. Samson's thirst occurred at a time of unspirituality in the midst of great victory. The Lord in His final spiritual crisis, feeling spiritually forsaken by the Father, fearing He had sinned (Ps. 22:1-6), may therefore have feared Samson had been an all too accurate prototype.

Notes

(1) See *The Essence Of Prayer*. Examples include: Gen. 19:24; 2 Chron. 14:11; Ps. 3:1-4; 142:1,2; Jn. 11:21,22; 1 Kings 19:10 cp. Rom. 11:2,3; Ps. 106:44 cp. Is. 64:3.

5.5 Samson In Gaza (Judges 16: 1-3)

The way this passage starts with "Then" is one of several classic conjunctions which occur in the Biblical record. The "But" of Acts 5:1 is another. After the spiritual and personal glory of the fight at Lehi, "Then..." Samson goes to Gaza and sees a whore. It may not have happened immediately afterwards (n.b. 15:20), but it seems purposefully placed where it is in the record. A similar example occurs in 14:19,20 cp. 15:1: after repenting of his marriage with the Philistine girl and using his failure as an opportunity to seek occasion against God's enemies, Samson then relents and lets his human love for the girl take him over, and he goes to visit and sleep with her. And again in 16:3, we see Samson repentant as he lies there at midnight, and he rises up and in the spirit of the Lord's cross, carries away the gate of his enemies. And then, "it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman..." (16:4). He simply couldn't keep up the level of spiritual intensity which he fain would have. And again, we know much about this problem ⁽¹⁾. And yet Samson went to Gaza conscious that his people had failed to drive out the tribes (Josh. 11:22). Judah had captured it in Joshua's strength (1:18), but had let the Philistines return. So Samson chose Gaza from spiritual motives; and yet he schemed out his plan to enable him to gratify his flesh.

We have elsewhere demonstrated (*Samson And Jesus*) how Samson at this time reflected something of the spirit and victory of the Lord Jesus on the cross. And yet once again, as with the fight at Lehi, there was a strong unspiritual element in Samson in Gaza at this time. He schemed to have a little of both; to please his flesh, and yet also do the work of God. It seems that his conscience once again pricked him about this. "He went in to spend the night" with the prostitute, "But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors..." (16:1,3 NIV) ⁽²⁾. If he went in to spend the night there, he presumably entered the house at around 7 or 8. He had what he wanted, and then lay there thinking, the record seems to suggest, and decided to not lay there all night as he planned, but get up and do God's work. Whilst it is unrecorded, surely there were prayers of deep and fervent repentance as he lay there? His conscience likewise seems to have struck him after he attempted to marry the Philistine girl, and also when he burnt up the vineyards. And so again here. He may have justified his behaviour by reference back (in his deep subconscious, maybe) to how the spies sought to destroy Jericho by entering the city and lodging with a whore. The way he chose to destroy the Philistines at the end by bringing down the posts of their temple (16:29,30) has some connection with the way he chose to take up the posts of Gaza. Perhaps he remembered his earlier failure and repentance in Gaza, and now he was back there (16:21), he repented again and wished to replicate his earlier repentance and victory for the Lord.

The Psychology Of Samson

It's inevitable that the record of Samson in Gaza prompts us to reflect upon the psychology of Samson as a womanizer. Why are some men womanizers? Why was Samson a womanizer? The psychological basis for womanizing has been summarized like this: "Some men are

womanizers and what is wrong with them is that they have issues with commitment and intimacy that they refuse to deal with and escape into a fantasy relationship with another woman time after time. Other men though are seeking something they feel is missing in their primary relationship - understanding, excitement in bed, a woman that is challenging to them" . To that I'd add that most womanizers I know are simply very lonely men. Another psychologist comments: " Womanizers ...often claim to have a high sex drive and a lust for sexual variety. Their therapists say such men often don't like women or even sex. Womanizers have a disease or an addiction, in which they see women as the enemy. They think of " being a real man" as escaping a woman's control and as being someone who can powerfully manipulate and deceive women. Like a rapist, he seeks power and superiority" . How does all this apply to Samson?

If Samson in Gaza had been all rippling muscle, Delilah would not have had to ask where his strength lay. His strength was from God, not from his muscles. And yet he would've been perceived as a " real man" , a strong man... it was just enigmatic to everyone, how this was, when an ordinary man acted so strong. Perhaps the Heb. 11 comment that he was " out of weakness made strong" implies he was actually quite wimpy. And so, perhaps he acted up to how others perceived him. He indulged the 'woman thing' because that's what heroic 'strong men' of his time were supposed to do. He felt he had to act *as if* he had a strong libido, when perhaps he didn't. And of course he was lonely... the picture of the young man wandering off from his parents when they were on their way down to talk with his first wife... meeting a lion... here's the very cameo of a lonely man. And his special calling from God would've made him lonely. This would have led to his problem with intimacy with others, in an Israel of cowards and semi-spirituality. He wasn't much understood by anyone... David had Jonathan, Gideon had Phurah, but Samson apparently had nobody at all. His whole behaviour with women, Delilah especially but actually all the recorded women in his life, speaks of a man who relished " escaping a woman's control and ... being someone who can powerfully manipulate and deceive women" .

But the bottom line is that Samson in Gaza sinned. Reflecting upon the psychology of Samson, we can understand *why* he was a womanizer. But we too are lonely, not understood by our world or even our own brotherhood, we too try to act up to the expectations and images which others place upon us... but this doesn't justify us! This is the lesson of Samson. Sin is sin, even if our own faith and spiritual commitment has placed us in a situation where the loneliness and lack of being understood of itself creates a psychological situation which leads to temptation. Falling to that temptation, even if like Samson in Gaza we preserve our faith and commitment in our deepest heart, isn't justifiable- and we shall pay the price for it.

Notes

(1) See *Enduring To The End*.

(2) " Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight" (16:3 AV) gives a different picture: of Samson 'laying' with her as a man lays with a woman, and then getting up and going out to do God's work. The interplay between sexuality and spirituality was never stronger.

5.6 Samson And Delilah (Judges 16:4-21)

The purpose of this final tragic incident was to bring Samson to a final realization that there was no third way in the service of Yahweh: it's all or nothing. The Lord worked through

Samson's 'little of both' syndrome. The Lord Jesus read the Samson record this way: He recommended that we too tear our eyes out to stop us stumbling from the path of total devotion (Mk. 9:47). We all know how the story turns out. And it's one of those parts of Scripture which I for one don't reading. I don't want to go on from chapter 15 to chapter 16. I know what's coming, and I'd rather not be reminded of the whole tragic sequence. And yet it's there, absolutely for our learning. And *Samson should have already learnt*. As his first wife had vexed her with her words to tease his secret from him, so Delilah did. As the Philistines laid wait for Samson as he lay with the whore in Gaza (16:2), so they laid wait in Delilah's bedroom (16:9). He had already repented of using God's service as an excuse for satisfying his own flesh in the incident with the Gaza prostitute. He had bitterly walked away from his first Philistine wife. He burnt down the vineyards, recalling how he had foolishly strolled in them as a Nazarite. He must have looked back and seen how he had played with fire. And now, he goes and does it all again. He goes to the valley of Sorek, 'choice vines', and Samson falls for Delilah, 'the vine'. He went down to the vineyards again; the Nazarite tried to take fire into his bosom again. It has been suggested from the way the Philistine lords are described as coming up to her, and the way in which she speaks of "the Philistines" (16:18-20), that she was in fact an apostate Israelitess. And thus he justified himself.

And yet there was a fire within Samson at this time. The thongs burst from him as when string comes close to a flame (16:9). This is similar to the scene in 15:14, where because the Spirit was upon him, Samson became like a burning fire which snapped his bonds. In the next two occasions when Samson broke his bands (16:12,14), this description doesn't occur. It may be that although the fire of the Spirit was within him, Samson came to feel that he, of his *own* ability, was doing the miracles: "*he* snapped the ropes off his arms..." (16:12). There is even a sense of unjustified, egoistic sarcasm in the way he gets the Philistines to tie him with flimsy pieces of grass and then breaks them off and kills them. Likewise when he kills the thirty Philistines and brings their armour (14:19 "spoil" only s.w. 'armour' 2 Sam. 2:21-23) as well as their clothes to the young men. He did the outward actions, but the inner awareness that all his ability was only of God slipped away. And his tragic path can so easily be ours.

The Samson: Delilah Relationship

We have seen earlier that Samson was well into spiritual brinkmanship. It had characterized his life, according to the selection of incidents the record presents us with. The sequence of events is worth listing:

Delilah asked Samson to tell her his closest secret,

then Delilah bound Samson as he asked

Samson awakes from a deep sleep with Delilah

Delilah playfully afflicts Samson while he is bound and Samson overcomes Delilah (16:19 implies this happened each time)

then Samson realizes Delilah has betrayed him

and the Philistine warriors were there waiting in the bedroom.

Then Samson goes out of the bedroom, shakes himself and kills them.

Then Delilah says Samson doesn't really love her

and they repeat the experience.

This is the classic material for love:hate relationships. At first sight, Samson appears an incomprehensible fool. But more extended meditation reveals the human likelihood of it all. She would've convincingly repented and asked for one last chance- time and again. It is hard not to interpret his sleeping exhausted with her and then the bondage session as some kind of sex game. And yet Samson thought he was strong enough to cope with it, as did Solomon years later. He may even have had some kind of desire to simply mock the Philistines when he suggested they should tie him up with seven pieces of grass. He seems to somehow have known that his first wife would wangle his secret from him and betray him, and thus he would have the opportunity to kill Philistines- even though he didn't intend to open his heart to her (14:16). And now the same happened. He seems to have known that she would betray him, although he evidently thought better of her; for he was deeply in love with her. He initially says: " If *they* bind me..." (16:7), but changes this to " If *thou*..." (16:13); he knew beforehand that she would betray him, although couldn't admit it to himself. And so we see the complexity of Samson's situation. It was not that his telling of the secret to Delilah was necessarily a sin in itself. He trusted her and yet knew on another level she would betray him. This is just a psychological condition. It helps explain why the Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him (Jn. 6:64), and yet how He could really trust in Judas as his own familiar friend, confide in him (Ps. 41:9), tell him that he would sit with the other eleven on thrones in the Kingdom (Mt. 19:28). This was ever a serious contradiction for me, until considering the Samson : Delilah relationship in depth. A man can know something about someone on one level, but act and feel towards them in a quite different way than this knowledge requires. In the same way, it was in one sense true that the Jews "knew not whence I come" (Jn. 8:24,14 RV) and yet in another sense they knew perfectly well the Divine origin of Jesus (Jn. 7:28). David likewise must have known Absalom's deceit; but he chose not to see it, for love's sake. "They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things [just as Absalom did in the gate]...but I, as a deaf man, heard not" (Ps. 38:12,13). Paul surely knew how Corinth despised him, how little they knew and believed, and as he himself said, the more he loved them, the less they loved him. And yet in all honesty he could say: "As ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence *and in your love to us*" (2 Cor. 8:7). Yet the more abundantly he loved them, the less they loved him- not the more abundantly. Yet he saw them as loving him abundantly. One also gets the sense that the Gibeonites' deception was somehow guessed by the elders of Israel, but against their better judgment they disregarded the telltale signs (Josh. 9:7). Or Amasa, taking no heed to the sword in Joab's hand...against his better judgment, surely (2 Sam. 20:10). This is a feature of human nature; and for me so far, the contradictions evident in the Jesus : Judas relationship and the Samson : Delilah relationship are only explicable for me by realizing this. The whole thing is an eloquent essay in the Lord's humanity and the depth of His 'in-loveness' with Judas the traitor. And this Lord is our Lord, the same yesterday and today. Our self-knowledge will be deepened by realizing that we too have this spiritual schizophrenia: it's not that we are spiritual one day and unspiritual the next. We are both flesh and spirit at the very same moment. Appreciation of this will help us cope with the more evident failures of our brethren. It doesn't necessarily mean that they must be written off as totally unspiritual and insincere because of acts and attitudes of evident unspirituality. The Spirit is still there, at the very same moment. Think of how Samson slept with a whore until midnight, and then in faith rose

up and was granted the Spirit to perform a great act of Christ-like, cross-like victory over the enemies of God's people.

Samson retained his faith, for we have shown that all his victories over the Philistines were a result of God responding to his faith. And yet he was weak at the same time. Yet he seems to have come to *assume* that he had faith, and that God would never leave or forsake him. Samson tells Delilah that if he is bound with grass, he will be weak "like one man" (16:7 Avmg.). This is surely an allusion to passages like Lev. 26:8 and Josh. 23:10- that one man would chase many. Samson implies that he fights like he is many men; he appropriated those blessings to himself. He came to assume he had faith. Lifetime Christians have the same tendency, with the joy and vigour of first faith now far back in time. Samson had been bound before and had burst those bonds (15:13); he seems to have assumed that one past deliverance was an automatic guarantee of future ones. His great zeal for the Lord's work seems to have lead him to chose the single life; and yet he evidently was in the habit of occasional affairs (14:3 "is there never..."), using prostitutes and having on and off relationships with women like Delilah. Samson thought his devotion and the appalling apostacy of his brethren kind of justified it. Note how Timothy and Hezekiah seem to likewise have stumbled in their commitment to the single life.

The way Samson asked Delilah to fasten the hair of his head with a nail and then try to have mastery over him is a parody of what would have been a well known incident: Deborah's mastery over Barak (4:21). This would indicate that Scripture was never far from his mind. In Samson's relationship with Delilah, he got closer and closer to the edge. Samson tells Delilah to bind him, then he gets closer to showing his hand: he asks her to do something to his hair. And then, he falls to the final folly. It could even be that after the previous teasings he left her completely (16:14 "he went away")- after the pattern of his previous twinges of conscience concerning his first wife, his love of vineyards, his lying with the whore in Gaza... But he evidently returned to her. The Philistines are described as "abiding" in Delilah's house (16:9)- a word normally used in the sense of 'permanently living'. It would seem that Samson didn't permanently live with her, but occasionally visited her, until at the end he was happy to live with her (she pressed him "daily"), co-habiting with her other Philistine lovers. With his hair shaven, he 'went out, as at other times'- deciding bitterly that he had really had enough, and once again he would walk out on her, this time for good, and would 'shake himself' and take a hold on himself. But this time it was too late.

Strength And Hair

The question arises: why did Samson tell Delilah that if his hair was cut, he would become weak? Surely he must have known within him that she would do it, in line with past experience? He went out as before to fight the Philistines, surely aware that he had been shaved, and yet assuming God would still be with him. He had come to realize that his long hair was not the real source of his strength, on some kind of metaphysical level. He saw that his strength was from the Spirit of God, not long hair or Nazariteship. He went out knowing, presumably, that his hair had been shaven, and yet still assumed he would have God's strength. And even when his hair began to grow again, he still had to pray for strength (16:28). He fell into the downward spiral of reductionism. He figured that if his hair was shaved, well it was no big deal. He was supposed to be a Nazarite all the days of his life, and yet perhaps he came to reason that because he had touched plenty of dead bodies, he therefore needed to be shaved anyway (Num. 6:9). He thought that therefore God would

accept him in principle as a Nazarite even though he had broken the letter of Nazariteship, and therefore losing his hair was only a surface level indicator of spirituality.

And yet there is also good reason to think that there was an association in Samson's mind between his hair and his God-given strength. For why did he "tell her all his heart" by saying that if he were shaved, he would lose his strength? And of course, when his hair was cut off, then his strength went. Samson saw a link between being a Nazarite and having strength (16:17). When Samson went outside from Delilah and shook himself as he usually did, was he not shaking his hair free before attacking the Philistines, as if he saw in his hair the source of his strength? However, this must all be balanced against the evidence in the previous paragraph, that Samson originally realized that his strength came from God, not his hair. Whilst he even had this realization, theoretically, when he gave Delilah the possibility of shaving him, he also at this time had the conception that his strength was associated with his hair length. I would suggest that this can be resolved by understanding that although his strength was not in his hair, this is how Samson came to see it. And therefore God went along with this view, and treated Samson *as if* his strength was in his hair. And therefore He departed from him when he allowed his hair to be shaved. If Samson had really told Delilah the truth about the source of his strength, he would have said: 'Faith, causing the Spirit of God to come upon me to do His work'. Samson knew this, and therefore he allowed her to shave him; and yet it was also true that in his heart of hearts, he also at the same time believed that his hair was the source of his strength. So he was the victim of reductionism, as well as tokenism. He came to see the mere possession of long hair as a sign of spirituality. And yet at the same time he reduced and reduced the real meaning of Nazariteship to nothing. Difficult as this analysis may be to grasp, I really believe that it has much to teach us; for the latter day brotherhood is afflicted with exactly these same problems.

The way Samson was so deeply sleeping on Delilah's knees that he didn't feel them shave him, and then he went out and shook himself (16:20; this seems a fair translation)- all this could suggest he was drunk. There is no concrete evidence for this, but his love of vineyards would suggest he had a yearning for the forbidden fruit. He had broken the Nazarite vow by touching dead bodies, he obviously thought that having unshaven hair was only tokenistic and irrelevant to the real spirit of Nazariteship, and therefore he may have reasoned that alcohol was also another tokenism. Thus his reductionism destroyed him (almost). Perhaps it was brought about by a misunderstanding of God's waiving of the Nazarite ban on touching dead bodies; for after all, God had made Samson a Nazarite, and then empowered him to go and kill Philistines in personal combat, thereby touching dead bodies. So God waived one principle for a more important one; and yet Samson abused this, taking the principle far further than God intended, to the point that he ended up justifying sin as righteousness.

The Shame Of Rejection

"He did not know that the Lord had left him" (16:20) is the depth of spiritual tragedy. The Lord Jesus may have had this in mind when He spoke of how the rejected would not know what hour He would come upon them (Rev. 3:3). Samson went through the experience of rejection at the Lord's hands in advance of the actual judgment seat. He was set grinding in the prison- a figure which was later picked up as representative of the unbeliever generally (Is. 42:7; 61:1; 1 Pet. 3:19). He was as it were delivered to Satan, that he might learn (1 Tim. 1:20); his own wickedness corrected him (Jer. 2:19). And this finally brought him to himself. His experience was a pattern for the apostate Israel whom he loved. Yahweh forsaking His people is associated with them cutting off their hair in Jer. 7:29- an evident allusion to

Samson's shame. As the Philistines rejoiced over Samson and praised their god for their victory, so Babylon was to do years later, as Zedekiah like Samson had his eyes put out.

The shame of the final fight is graciously unrecorded. The events of 16:19-21 seem a little out of sequence. It would seem that Delilah awoke Samson, and he thought he would go outside, shake himself and kill the Philistines whom he was sure were in wait. But she started to tease him as before in their games of bondage; but this time, " she began to subdue him, and he began to weaken" (16:19 LXX; one meaning of 'Delilah' is 'the one who weakens'). " Began" is a strange translation; it is often translated to profane / humble. She spiritually abused him. And then she called the Philistines. He was powerless, physically, beneath that woman, and was therefore no match for them. The fact she was physically stronger than him when the Spirit of the Lord left him is proof enough that he was not a physically strong man in his own right. The way the apostate woman subdued him physically, in the name of a love / sex game, would have remained in his memory. He, the strong man of Israel, had been conquered by a worthless woman. His humiliation was to be typical of Israel's: " children are their oppressors (cp. the young lad at the feast?), women rule over them" (Is. 3:12). It is quite possible that Peter had Samson in mind, when he wrote of how " they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness...they themselves are the servants of corruption: *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world...they are again *entangled* therein, and overcome..." (2 Pet. 2:18-20). Samson had been spiritually overcome, and therefore physically he was overcome and brought in bondage.

Eyeless in Gaza

Joshua's prophecy that those who married the surrounding women would find them " a snare and a trap for you, a scourge in your sides, and thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12,13 RSV) was fulfilled in Samson's relationship with Delilah. But the similarity is such that surely Samson must have been aware of it, when he asked Delilah to tie him up with cords. Joshua's words were not too distant history and surely Samson knew them. This is Samson at his darkest. He was mixing up his sex game with Delilah with Joshua's words. Joshua had said that these women would tie up the Israelite man if they married them. Samson didn't marry her; it is possible that she was a renegade Israelite, not a Gentile; and he wanted to show that actually Samson could handle a bit of fun with Delilah without really breaking the spirit of Joshua's words. And so as he broke those bands each time to go out and kill some more Philistine warriors, he doubtless felt he was still in spiritual control. Solomon made exactly the same mistake; he took foreign wives. And the record comments: " of the nations concerning which the Lord had said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for *surely* they will turn away your heart...and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:1-3). The implication is that Solomon took those wives thinking 'Well, I know the law says they will surely turn away my heart, but actually they won't, I can handle it'; and he didn't handle it. Solomon seems to have realized, in the bitterness of Ecclesiastes, that he had made the same mistake as Samson: " I find more bitter than death [i.e. it would be better to be dead than be in this position] the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26). These were surely Samson's thoughts in those eyeless weeks in Gaza: better to have died than to have been snared by Gentile women. He let her snare him, conscious of the allusion to Joshua's words; and thought he could break free from the relationship at will. But in the end, he couldn't. Any form of sin is by nature addictive. The only way of dealing with it is to break completely. The Lord taught this when

He spoke of the need to gouge out the eye that offends our spirituality. And He was alluding to how Samson's eyes were 'picked out' (Young), "gouged out" (16:21 RSV). We either do it to ourselves, or the Lord will do it to us. He will have the conquest over sin in our existence, ultimately. Either we work with Him in this, and thereby remain with Him eternally; or we foolishly resist Him, and He has His way against our will, and in doing so destroys us. With a logic like this, any sacrifice is logically given. But more than logic. If we *truly love* the Lord God and His Son, the desire to give, to serve for nothing, will render this logical encouragement unnecessary.

5.7 The Death Of Samson (Judges 16:23 - 30)

A read through all the recorded words of Samson will reveal a growing humility and spirituality. "Suffer me that I may... that I may" (16:26) reflects a courtesy and humility distinctly lacking in his previous recorded speech. His growth came to its intended climax in the repentance and final peak of spirituality which he achieved in his time of dying. He was made weak by Delilah, and yet out of weakness he was made strong by pure faith (Heb. 11:34). Paul, Job, Jacob, Moses, the Lord Himself, all reached their spiritual pinnacle at the end. And so surely with us. Like Paul and the crucified thief, Samson by his death came to a deep realization of the reality of judgment to come: "Remember me" (16:28) must be read in this context. It carries the connotation of 'remember me for good and therefore forgive me at the judgment' in Ps. 25:6,7; Lk. 23:46. It seems that Nehemiah was inspired by this at his end (16:28 = Neh. 13:22,31; did he too come to a finer realization of his failures at the end?). "Remember me" was a cry only used prior to Samson by men in weakness: Gen. 15:8; Josh. 7:7; Jud. 6:22 (Gideon, Samson's hero, had used it). Yet now Samson appropriates it to himself in faith that he will be mercifully treated at the judgment. And his example in turn inspired Nehemiah. The intensity of Samson's repentance was quite something. It must have inspired Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:11), who like Samson was bound (16:21) and humbled (16:5,16,19 AVmg.)- and then repented with a like intensity. And Zedekiah went through the same basic experience, of capture by his enemies, having his eyes put out, his capture attributed to false gods; and he likewise repented (2 Kings 25:7).

Not only did Samson at his death repent. He reached a very high level of appreciation of the grace of God, and the principles through which He articulates this grace. The record seems to suggest there was a link between the growth of his hair, and God giving him strength again. This doesn't mean that there was some metaphysical link between his strength and his hair. Rather does it show how God responded to his faith and *what was behind the growth of his hair*, and therefore gave him strength to destroy the Philistines. It would seem that Samson decided to keep the Nazarite vow again. He was in no position to offer the inaugural sacrifice which the law required; and yet he threw himself upon God's grace, trusting that his zeal would be accepted by God; that he, the sinner and failure and shamer of Yahweh, could be allowed to make that special act of devotion in Nazariteship. And he was accepted in this, as witnessed by the great power of the death of Samson.

Samson's desire to die with the Philistines could be read as suicidal (16:30). In this case, he had elements of weakness at the end, and yet he was accepted as dying in faith. Or it could be understood that he wanted to die because he believed that through his death, he would achieve God's plan for taking the gates of his enemies. In this case he would have had the spirit of Christ. Samson's death plea for vengeance against the Philistines for his two eyes (16:28) sounds woefully human. Indeed, the RSV and RVmg. speak of him asking for vengeance "for one of my two eyes", as if he felt that even if God gave the destruction he

asked for, this would only half avenge him. This would indicate a real bitterness, an unGodly hatred of both sinner and sin. In some ways, for all the intensity of weeping before God in repentance (16:28 LXX), Samson had not progressed much from his attitude in 15:7, over 20 years before- where he once again had admitted that his motive for 'seeking occasion against the Philistines' was partly just personal revenge. The spirit of not avenging oneself but leaving it to God to do was evidently something he never quite rose up to in his life (Rom. 12:19). " That I may be *at once* avenged of the Philistines *for my two eyes*" seems to be quite without any desire for the vindication of God's Name. Although it seems to me it was wrong, and betrayed some unspirituality, yet it is taken as the epitome of the desire of all the faithful for vindication through the coming of Christ (Rev. 6:10).

However, it could be argued that he had earlier taken vengeance on the Philistines (15:5), knowing that the Law taught that Israel were not to take vengeance (same word) *on each other* (Lev. 19:18), but could do so on their enemies (Num. 31:2; Dt. 32:43 cp. Josh. 10:13). He was thus treating the Philistines as out of covenant relationship, whereas his weak brethren were all too willing to forget the fundamental difference between them. We would surely be happier if Samson had asked if God would let him take vengeance on God's behalf against God's enemies. This was surely in Samson's mind, but the shame of the loss of his eyes was all too humanly strong within him. I can only conclude that therefore it would seem that he died with this weakness still conquered: a desire for personal retribution against the Philistines. Jacob and Paul likewise died with some weaknesses evidently still showing; and there is not one of us who will die with every weakness conquered. And yet, without wishing to inspire any complacency but rather a thankful appreciation of God's grace, the point must be made that they were all graciously accepted by a loving Father. Samson's death was died in faith, and at his time of dying he had been made strong out of weakness, on account of his faith (Heb. 11:32-34). " Let me ('my soul', AVmg.) die with the Philistines" (16:30) was surely a recognition that in his heart he had been a Philistine, for all his hatred of them and despising of them as uncircumcised, and thus outside the covenant (15:18). It could be that he was too hard on himself: for even at his weakest, Delilah had observed that his heart wasn't with her: it was somewhere else, i.e. with the God of Israel (16:15). Yet Samson wanted to receive the just desert for his life: to die with the Philistines. His mind may well have been on Scripture as he died: on Joshua 23:10,11, which spoke of how one man would chase a thousand (he had earlier appropriated this to himself in 16:7)- *if* Israel took good heed to their *souls* (AVmg.). And perhaps Samson realized that he hadn't taken good heed to his soul, and therefore had ultimately been unable to chase a thousand men. And yet he died in faith, even though with a deeply appreciated recognition of his sinfulness. As with Paul and Jacob, deep recognition of personal sinfulness was a feature of their spiritual maturity. And as with Jacob, Job and Moses, Samson seems to have reached a progressively higher appreciation of the Name of God. His calling on Yahweh Elohim at the end, weeping before Him, was the first and only time he ever used that title; and the first time we actually read the covenant Name on his lips (cp. 15:18).

God patiently worked through the weakness of Samson to achieve not only a great final victory over the Philistines, but also Samson's own salvation. The way Samson asked the lad to guide him to the pillars in the Philistine language, learnt in his mis-spent relationships with women, the way he knew the architectural structure of the Dagon-temple, where presumably he had been in his earlier love-hate affair with the Philistines- God didn't reject him for these earlier failures, but worked with him, making use of the knowledge and experience which Samson had picked up along the road of earlier failure. This is how God works with us, too-

if only we would have the humility to realize it. And the least we can do is to replicate it in our dealings with our failing brethren.

5.8 Samson A Type Of Christ

There is no doubt that we are intended to see Samson as a type of Christ. All the Judges in some way prefigured the Lord; for they were "saviours" raised up to deliver God's weak and failing people in pure grace, when according to God's own word, they should have received the due punishment of rejection (Neh. 9:27,28). He who delivered "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15) was typified by all those earlier deliverers of God's people from bondage (cp. Mt. 1:21). The "great salvation" of Heb. 2:3 which the Lord achieved was foreshadowed by the great deliverance wrought by Samson (15:18). He would have meditated upon the promises of the seed, that he was to deliver Israel from their enemies, and to possess the gate of his enemies. When Samson took away the gates of Gaza, he surely saw himself as being that seed. The way he openly "sought occasion" against the Lord's enemies was therefore perhaps a self-conscious desire to in some sense do what the promised seed would do.

Consider the more obvious points of contact between Samson and Jesus which make Samson a type of Christ:

- The birth of both of them was foretold by an Angel
- at a time when Israel had been handed over to their enemies.
- The record of Samson's birth frequently uses the phrases "the man" and "the woman" (e.g. 13:10,11), as if to send the mind back to Eden- with the implication that Samson was the seed of the woman, in type of Christ. "The woman" is a phrase nearly always associated in Scripture with the birth of someone who was to be a seed of the woman ([1](#)). "Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware", coming from the mouth of an Angel (13:13), surely confirms the Eden allusions.
- Both married Gentiles; both were betrayed for pieces of silver.
- The supreme strength and courage of Samson in fighting and killing the lion points forward to Christ's spiritual verve and fervour in destroying our adversary the devil, which is likened to a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8).
- 'Samson' means "the sun" - linking with the Lord's title as "the sun of righteousness" in Malachi 4.
- The incident in Gaza is evidently typical of the Lord's work. There was Samson, "the splendour of the son", 'compassed in' by his enemies (as Christ on the cross, Ps. 118:5,10-12) in Gaza ('fortified stronghold', cp. death). Then he arose in the darkness, rendered powerless the gates of death and carried them up 30 miles to a high altitude (cp. Heaven), to Hebron, 'the city of fellowship', where the tomb of Abraham was (Gen. 23:19), and where Gentile giants had once lived (Num. 13:22), conquered by faithful Israelites. Joshua had taken Hebron (Josh. 10:36) but Israel had not followed up his victory, and the Philistines had returned; Caleb then took it (Josh. 15:13), but again, by Samson's time, the Philistines were back. And Samson, although a type of Christ, was intensely aware of all this failure (cp. how

he chose Gaza and Timnath, areas with a similar history, for his other exploits). It would seem that Samson killed the men at the gates, the leaders of the city, and then took the gates with him (16:3 cp. 2). The Hebrew used for Samson 'taking away' the gates is that translated 'possess' in the Genesis promises. Thus he possessed the gates of his enemies and slew their figureheads, as the Lord did through the cross. Samson obviously saw some specific meaning in taking the gates to Hebron and the tomb of Abraham. He surely saw that he was prefiguring Messiah's work of taking the gate of his enemies, as promised to Abraham. Or perhaps he saw himself as 'in' the Messiah, and sharing in what He would do in the future. Archaeologists have found tablets that refer to the power of Baal to possess the gates of all who oppose him; and Samson evidently wanted to show the superiority of Yahweh over Baal. The fellowship ('Hebron') which was enabled by the Lord's victory should never be undone by us; He died that He might gather together in one all God's people, to reconcile us all in one body both to each other and to God. To break apart the body is therefore to deny the essential intention of the cross. There are other points of contact with the Lord's passion. The men of Gaza laid wait in the gates of the city; they were therefore the rulers? But they decided to only kill him in the morning. The rulers of the Jews decided likewise.

" Through death..."

Samson at his death was Samson at his finest; and this was true of the Lord. Thus Samson was a type of Christ. The way he was betrayed for silver by the one he trusted means is an obvious link with the Lord's experience. The way he died with such a deep, deep sense of betrayal must have found an echo with the Lord. We must have all asked: 'Why, oh why, did Samson go on trusting her, when it was so obvious she was going to betray him?'. It may have been because she was an Israelitess (even if a renegade). The way she says " The Philistines be upon thee!" (16:20) and the way the lords of the Philistines came up to her (16:5) may suggest this. Their offer of money to her was exactly after the pattern of the Jews' approach to Judas. The way " pieces of silver" feature in both records leads us to wonder whether the correspondence was so exact that she also betrayed the helpless Samson with a kiss, as Judas did. It is suggested in [Samson And Delilah](#) that her betrayal of Samson was done in the spirit of some kind of loving teasing. She started to afflict Samson, and had the better of him. She may well have betrayed him with a kiss as she called the Philistine warriors in. We can reason on, and consider how she like Judas would have avoided eye contact, how Samson would have looked at her with a pain and disbelief and disappointment that is beyond words, altogether ineffable... and how she as Judas must have lived a wretched life afterwards, until her (premature?) death. Prov. 6:26,27; 7:1 make clear allusion to Samson and Delilah, and they suggest that Delilah was a " whorish woman" . In this case, her motivation for betraying Samson was fundamentally financial, apart from other lesser factors which there probably were. The bribe she was offered has been estimated in modern terms as around \$500,000 (1997). And Judas likewise went to the chief priests and asked how much they would give him for betraying the Lord. Again, Samson was a type of Christ. This all indicates the unbelievable materialism which is in our natures: to betray a good man, even the Son of God, ultimately for pieces of metal.

I think it wasn't only that love is blind. In all such deep relationships there is a sense that we may know full well the weakness of the one we love, and what they will do to us in the end; and yet our nature has a tendency to overlook this. This is true not only of male:female relationships. The problem we have in understanding Samson (if we do have a problem with it) occurs again, in exactly the same form, when we consider the Lord's relationship with Judas. He knew from the beginning who should betray him. He knew that the one with whom

He shared especially sweet counsel would betray Him (Ps. 55:12-14). And surely the Lord Jesus had reflected on David's experience with Ahithophel. And yet He spoke of how the twelve (including Judas) would sit on twelve thrones, sharing his glory (Mt. 19:28). He loved Judas and treated him as a close friend, even though he knew that this very close friend would betray Him. There is, to my mind, no satisfactory explanation of this apart from to realize the utter humanity of the Lord; that just like Samson, He could sincerely love a man whom he knew would betray Him. This same Lord is the same today and forever. He isn't a hard man. He loves and actively fellowships *at the time* with those whom later He knows will betray Him, even now. He doesn't just not bother because He knows they will later turn nasty. Lord, we salute you for this, your utter grace.

Micah 7 is a prophecy shot through with Messianic allusion ⁽²⁾. Christ openly quoted Mic. 7:6 concerning himself and His men in Mt. 10:35,36. Mic. 7:1 is alluded to in Mt. 21:19; 7:4 in Mt. 7:16. There are many references to Christ's betrayal and arrest: " They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net" (7:2 = Jn. 8:59; 10:31,39; 11:8). " The prince (Herod) asketh (for a sign, Lk. 23:8), the judge (Pilate) asketh for a reward; and the great man (Caiaphas the High Priest) he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up" (7:3), i.e. hatch their plot together. Because of this, " the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh" (7:4 = Lk. 19:44). " Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide (reference to Judas- Ps. 55:13): keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom" . This begins a reference to Samson's experience with Delilah. " I will look unto the Lord (Samson first used the Yahweh Name when he cried in his final suffering)...my God will hear me (cp. " Hear me this once")...rejoice not against me, O mine enemy (the Philistines mocking Samson): when I fall, I shall arise (Heb. elsewhere used about the resurrection); when I sit in darkness (Samson sitting in blindness in the prison), the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him (Samson's thoughts, surely), until he plead my cause (" Remember me!")...he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy (Delilah, symbol of the Philistines to Samson) shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me (as Delilah did?), Where is Yahweh thy God? mine eyes shall behold her (is this Samson imagining the judgment, with restored eyesight?)" . If these connections are valid- and it is hard to deny this- then Samson died full of vision of the resurrection, judgment and the final manifestation of his forgiveness which he would then receive. Paul likewise has plenty of these references in his final writings in 2 Tim. 4. One question remains: why are there these Samson references in a prophecy of the Lord's betrayal? Surely Samson was a type of Christ. It could be that the Lord Jesus was being warned, prophetically, of how a particular woman could be his undoing, as she was Samson's. The way the Messianic Proverbs warn the Son of God against a particular woman lend weight to this. Or it could be that in the same way as Delilah betrayed Samson, so Judas was to betray Jesus, and He would go through the same gamut of emotions. This would be why this prophecy of His betrayal is described in terms of Delilah's betrayal of Samson.

You will recall the words of Heb. 2:14,15 about Jesus: " through death he (destroyed) him that had the power of death" . This is exactly the idea of Jud. 16:30: " Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" . Through his own death, Christ destroyed the power of sin, epitomized in the dead Philistines. Perhaps there is an allusion in Hebrews 2 to this passage. Heb. 2:15 goes on to say that Christ delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" . Now that's packed with allusions to the time of

the judges- Israel in hard bondage to their Philistine masters, living in fear, until judges or 'deliverers' like Samson delivered them from their oppressors. The same great relief which Israel felt after Samson's deliverances of them, can be experienced by us spiritually. The sins, the doubts, the fears which we all have as we analyze our spiritual standing, should melt away when we recall the great deliverance which we have received. In practice, Samson must have become a larger than life figure. We get the impression that the Israelites had a problem relating to him due to his fantastic physical strength; his wives likewise must have felt distanced from him, knowing that he had a spiritual inner being which they had no access to. We too can feel distanced from Christ as we perceive more and more the supreme spiritual strength which he had. Yet in all his ways, Samson sought the glory of God, and means of overcoming Israel's Philistine enemies. Even his first marriage with a Philistine woman was "of the Lord, that he (Samson) sought an occasion against the Philistines" (14:4). Here we see his all consuming desire to actively seek conflict with the powers of sin which debilitated and crippled Israel. As we see the forces of sin so strong in our own lives, as well as in the new Israel generally, we too should have the zeal which he had in seeking an occasion against our own flesh. It is easy to think that we are just asked to passively resist temptation whenever it arises. But the example of Samson and the Lord Jesus was of active warfare against the flesh, going on to the offensive rather than being only on the defensive.

There are several other parallels with the Lord's death, following through Samson as a type of Christ:

- The Jews wanted the Lord's death because they saw Him as their destroyer (Jn. 11:50). And the Philistines likewise (16:24).

- The way they made sport of Samson (16:25) links with how the Lord was mocked, and was even the song of the drunkards (Ps. 69:12).

- The Lord's silence was due to His complete humiliation (Acts 8:32,33). That extreme humiliation can be entered into through a consideration of Samson's ineffable shame. He was given women's work in prison, grinding at the mill, in order to rub the point in (Ex. 11:5; Mt. 24:41). 'Grinding' was some kind of figure of speech for the sex act (s.w. Job 31:10). The "fettors of brass" with which he was bound would have recalled his games of bondage with Delilah, and the same word is translated "filthiness" in a sexual context (Ez. 16:36). The word used for 'prison' means literally 'house of binding'- n extension of Delilah's house, they would have joked. One can imagine how the story of how Delilah enticed him would have become the gossip of the nation.

- The utter exhaustion of Samson from their afflictions (prodding with sticks?) is revealed when he asks the lad "Suffer me..." (Heb. 'allow me to rest / take a break'). The Lord's physical exhaustion, driven to the limit of human endurance, must be imagined.

- The Philistines didn't kill Samson immediately; they wanted to prolong the agony of his death. It was evidently their intention to kill him. Perhaps it was their plan to torture him and then finally torture him to death at the feast to their god- cp. the Lord's planned death at Passover. The great sacrifice which they planned to offer (Heb. 'kill') was probably Samson (16:23).

- Samson dying between the two pillars is broadly similar, as a kind of silhouette, to the Lord's death between two other crosses. The way the lad (also a Hebrew? for they spoke the

same language?) " held" Samson's hand is significant, for the same word is translated 'to strengthen / encourage'. Perhaps the lad strengthened Samson as the repentant thief did the Lord.

- The final effort of Samson, both to speak and to act, bowing himself (Heb. 'stretching himself out to his full extension') with all his spiritual and physical energy: this was the final effort of the Lord. Again, we see in both how we are lead to a final crescendo of spiritual effort at the end of probation, although this may be articulated in various forms.

- The way the body was taken up by brave Israelites after Samson's death recalls the action of Joseph and Nicodemus.

Samson's Awareness Of Christ

There is reason to think that to some degree, Samson would have appreciated all this- that he was a type of Christ. Samson may have recognized the strength of the future Saviour when he gave his riddle to the Philistines. He meditated upon that dead lion with the sweet honey in it, and formulated his comment: " What is sweeter than honey? What (or, Who?) is stronger than a lion (Heb. 'the strong one'- this is one of Samson's many word plays)?" . 'Who is stronger than the strong one?' was an idea picked up by the Lord Jesus in, I suggest, conscious allusion (Mt. 12:29); although it is masked in the English text. He was the strong one who was stronger than the strong man of sin. Through His victory, the roaring lion of the devil lays dead. And in his skull is sweet honey; did Samson see in this the same meaning as David did in Ps. 119:103? Did he so understand the nature and method of the Lord's work that he appreciated that the Lord's victory over all His people's enemies would be through the power of God's word, lying there in the place of the mind of the beast He overcame? Yet Samson killed the lion himself; surely he felt that to some degree *he* was the strong man who had overcome the beast, through his application to God's word. His frequent references and allusions to God's past revelation, both in his words and actions, would indicate that he was a man of the word. And yet despite this, he fell so miserably. Proverbs contains a number of Samson allusions (16:32; 25:28). But the most powerful are in 7:1,5,22,25-27, where the young Israelite is commended to God's word, because this will keep him from falling to the wiles of the Gentile woman, who throws down strong men into the way of miserable death. Solomon evidently writes with allusion to Samson; that here was the man who loved God's word, and yet went so astray with women. And tragically enough, Solomon himself did just the same! He realized and lamented the tragedy of Samson, as a lover of the word who fell for the Gentile woman; and then, with all his wisdom, he did the very same thing! Here, for all to see, is the crucial difference between knowledge and faith.

However, due to the weakness of the flesh, Samson was a man who never quite made it, spiritually. In his time of dying he must have had a strong desire for salvation in the future seed. The way he pleads with God to remember him for good at the end, as he bows himself with all his physical and spiritual might, was picked up years later by the repentant thief. In a similar plight, he likewise pleaded, this time with the Lord Jesus, to be remembered for good, even though he was unworthy. And could it be that after the pattern of many others (e.g. Paul, Jacob) we all come, at the end of our mortality, to a peak of appreciation of the Lord Jesus, of our own sinfulness and His saving grace, and of our desperation for His salvation?

Notes

(1) See Andrew Perry, *The Doctrine Of Salvation* (Sunderland: Willow, 1993).

(2) For a fuller exposition, see H.A. Whittaker, *Bible Studies* pp. 94-99 (Cannock: Biblia, 1987).