

A Sermon on the

Death of Moses

Preached in Richmond,

On Thursday night

May 6th 1838

Numbers 27 ch. 12.13. And the Lord said unto Moses, get thee up into this mount Abarim and see the land, which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shall be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered

This subject will lead me to consider,

- I. The death of Moses and
- II. The softening circumstances with which it was attended_

Moses is certainly the most illustrious character, in all the Old Testament scriptures. He was chosen by the Almighty to be the great deliverer and lawgiver of the Israelites, and an eminent type of the redeemer of the world. "For Moses truly said unto the people fathers a prophet shall the Lord your god raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you" (Acts iii-22) _ The life of this distinguished individual is commenced in the book of Exodus and concluded in the book of Deuteronomy. According to the account there given, we learn that he was an Israelite of the tribe of Levis that he was born in the land of Egypt eighty years previous to the embarkation of the Israelites for the land of Canaan_ He was preserved from death while an infant by a very singular providence, the circumstances of which are the most interesting character_ About the time of his birth, a decree went out from the court of Egypt to destroy all the male infants of the Hebrews by throwing them into the river Nile. The cause of this edict being issued was the rapid increase of the Israelites, who had already become much more numerous than the Egyptians_ It was thought necessary in view of this fact, to make some provision against the rapid increase of this great body of people which had been introduced and settled in their country under the auspices of Joseph and the former King both of whom were now dead & gone_ To check the increase of this portion of their population, they had recourse to hard usage and cruel bondage. But the more they afflicted them, the more they grew and multiplied_ Having failed in several plans to lessen the number of the Hebrews, the king finally gave ~~command to~~ his people command to destroy all the male children of the Israelites by throwing them into the river. This order was given in the days of the infant Moses. The parents of course became much concerned for the preservation of his life, the more so because he was a very fair child_ remarkably handsome_ Accordingly they hid the infant for three months in some private apartment of the house_ When the mother could no longer conceal him for fear of being detected by the Egyptians: she took for him an ark of bulrushes_ a small basket made of rushes, and water proof by being ~~by~~ coated within and without by a kind of ~~bitumen~~ bitumen & pitch_ This ark or basket, the mother of Moses laid in the flags by the river's brink, that it might not be carried away by the stream, intending no doubt to visit the child in the night season.

After she had deposited the infant in the river, the mother retired while her daughter, the sister of Moses, remained in sight to see what would become of the child_ while she stood at a distance watching her infant brother, the daughter of the king & her servants came down to the river. The

daughter of Pharaoh soon discovered the ark floating among the flags, and sent one of her maids to bring it; and when she had opened ~~the ark~~ it, she saw the child: and behold the babe wept. And she had compassion on him & said, this is one of the Hebrew's children_ Providence brings no other ~~less~~ a person than Pharaoh's daughter just at that juncture; guides her to the place where this helpless infant lay, and inclined her heart to pity its condition. Never did a child ~~weep~~ ^cry so seasonably as this did: the babe wept which moved her compassion which no doubt was greatly increased by its extraordinary beauty. While Pharaoh's daughter was admiring the child, his sister came up and asked the lady if she should call a nurse ~~from~~ ^of the Hebrew women? The reply was "go" the maid went accordingly, and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her "take thy child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.

When ^he ~~the child~~ had grown to a proper size, she presented him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her adopted son_ And she called his name Moses, because she drew him out of the water_ Nothing more is said of Moses in the scriptures until he became a man. In his remarkable preservation, we evidently see the hand of providence. In being adopted by the King's daughter, he acquired a liberal education, and being educated in the learned court of Egypt he was better qualified to become an ambassador to that court in the name of God, in behalf of his suffering brethren.

When Moses had grown up to manhood he became deeply concerned for his suffering brethren. In his first and to redress their grievances he slew an Egyptian ^ for smiting a Hebrew and hid him in the sand. The next day after this affair, he saw two of the Hebrews striving together, and said to the person who was in the wrong, "where smitest thou thy fellow" The reply was who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killest the Egyptian? Moses finding that this act of his was known, and that Pharaoh sought to slay him fled for his life to the land of Midian where he married the daughter of Jethro, & kept his flocks ~~for~~ in the vicinity of Mount Horeb for the space of forty years. During this long exile, Moses was trained in the school of humble circumstances for that arduous mission for which he ~~had been~~ was destined by Almighty God, from the days of his infancy_

At length when the oppression of the Israelites had come to the full and they cried to God for succor, the Almighty appeared to Moses in a flame of fire, from the midst of a bush, and announced himself as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, & of Jacob; and commissioned him first to make known to the Israelites the divine will for their deliverance; and then to go with the elders of Israel to Pharaoh, requiring him in the name of the Lord, to suffer the people to go into the wilderness & perform sacrifice unto the Lord_ but the King not only refused, but increased the burdens of the Israelites. Having entirely failed to make any impression upon the King by way of intreaty he was permitted to inflict 10 successive plagues upon the Egyptians, which finally induced the king to let the people go, lest Moses should become a perpetual curse to the country. The Israelites accordingly set out from Egypt under the command of Moses, but soon after their departure, Pharaoh repented that he had given them permission to go, and in order to ~~overtake them and~~ bring them back to his service, he pursued them with xx a numerous army, and overtook them encamped on the border of the Red sea_ When the children ^ of Israel saw them coming in martial array, they were greatly alarmed, and murmured against Moses, that they were not permitted to remain in Egypt, rather than to die in the wilderness by the sword of the enemy. In the midst of their commotion, Moses said to the people, "Fear ye not, stand still & see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. At the command of God he stretched his rod over the sea, and the waters divided & became a wall to them on either hand and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea, upon dry ground and passed over in

perfect safety_ The Egyptians continued to pursue them, and follow on in their track through the sea, but while they ~~army was~~ ^ were attempting to pass over, Moses again stretched forth his hand, and the walls of the sea came together, and ~~engulfed~~ engulfed the whole army of Pharaoh, chariots, horses, and many so that not so much as one soul escaped_ Upon thy great deliverance Moses composed a song of praise to God, which was sung by all the children of Israel. This song is recorded in the XV ch of Exodus, and perhaps it is the most antient piece of genuine poetry extant in the world. It abounds with noble and sublime sentiments, expressed in strong and lofty language. Its figures are bold, its images striking, & every part of it calculated to affect the mind and possess the imagination. There is nothing comparable to it in all the work of profane writers. In the book of Rev it is termed the song of Moses, and is represented as ^being sung, together with the song of the Lamb, by those who had gotten victory over the beast, all standing on a sea of glass with the harps of god in their hand.

The life of Moses and the history of the Israelites after this event, to their finale settlement in the land of Canaan ^ are generally known to those who are conversant with the scriptures. During the pilgrimage of the Israelites through the wilderness the Almighty delivered the xxx^ ten commandments to Moses from the top of Mount Sinai, and gave him specific directions concerning the temporal & spiritual economy of his people. Amid the murmurs, and complaints, and idolatry, & rebellion of the Israel Moses exercised the most remarkable patience and the most unshaken confidence in the promises of God. There is but ^ one instance left upon record in which Moses ~~was guilty of~~ charged with offending God.

This instance occurred at a certain place in the wilderness when the Lord commanded ^ him ~~Moses~~ to speak to the rock that water might gush out, to supply the wants of the remaining Israelites ~~this transaction is recorded in the book of numbers xx:7-12.~~ In this affair Moses and Aaron were guilty of distrusting God, and ascribing the glory of the miracle which they brought to themselves rather than to God. For this offence, Moses & Aaron were both ~~permitted~~ excluded from entering the promised land. The sentence was executed ^first upon Aaron ~~first.~~ The lord commanded Moses to take Aaron up on Mount Hor, & strip him of his priestly garments, & put them upon Eleazar his son _ When he had done so, Aaron died in the presence of all Israel and was guttered(?) unto his people. ____ But Moses xxx greatly x lamented the sentence of his death __ He felt the most anxious desire to plant his feet upon that goodly land flowing with milk & honey, for x which he started from the land of Egypt, and for which he had suffered so many privations in the wilderness. But th irrevocable sentence had gone forth _ God had determined to punish this act of disobedience with exclusion from the promised land_ Like Aaron, Moses was called upon to die in the wilderness and to leave his body on the other side of Lord an ^ repeat the text we should learn from this ^instance of punishment to fear to sin against God_ As one act of disobedience kept Moses and Aaron from entering upon the land of Canaan_ So one sin_ one act of disobedience _ One unholy temper_ one unsanctified disposition will shut us out from the kingdom of heaven forever_

But when we review our past lives, instead of one sin, ten thousand rise up to condemn us_ Our own hearts speak our condemnation & God is greater than our heart, O he also will condemn us_ Our own hearts speak our condemnation & God is greater than our hearts, O he also will condemn us. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"

III. But although Moses could not obtain a repeal of the trying sentence which had gone forth against him; although he was not permitted to lead the armies of Israel into the land of

Canaan, although he was called upon to die on the other side of Jordan, yet his death was attended with several softening circumstances

1. In the first place, he was commanded to go up on Mount Abarim [^]previous to his death and see the land ~~previous to his death~~, which the lord had given to the children of Israel_ the mount which Moses ascended on this occasion is called in the scripture by the several names of Abarim, Nebo, & Pisgah_ ~~Abarim was the whole claim of~~ mountains bordering upon the land of Canaan was called Abarim, the tallest mountain of this tract was called Nebo, and the highest peak on Mount Nebo was called Pisgah_ thither Moses ascended at the command of God, & from this lofty peak, he was permitted to survey the land of Canaan which was but the type of that heavenly country which he was about to enter_ Like Moses, the Christian is generally favored with a delightful prospect of heaven, previous to his admission there_ the curtain is generally faintly lifted up, and a few fable says ~~permitted~~ afforded, to light up his pathway as he walks through the valley of the shadow of death

Many eminent Christians have been subject to bondage all their life time through fear of death, & with the poet they have ~~exclaim~~ been ready to exclaim

Could I but climb where Moses stood,
and view the landscape o'er,

Not Jordan's streams, nor death's cold flood
Should fright me from the shore

But such persons will have all their doubts [^] and fears remembered when they are called upon to contend with the pains & agonies of death_ "Fear not" is the Divine command "For I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy god" I will strengthen thee. I will help thee: I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" Under the protection of such a guardian the Christian can triumph over the king of terrors, and shout the victor's song O death where is they sting? O grave where is they victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" ____ If our hearts are sincere, and our motives pure, and we are doing the best we can in the service of the Lord, he will give strengthening grace in the hour of death__

In the second place, the death of Moses was softened by the promise that "he should be gathered unto his people ____" ____ To Abraham and Isaac & Jacob, and Joseph and the Israel of God_ He prized this people so highly on earth that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of god than to enjoy the pleasure of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt . Some has departed that he had known and numbers that he had not known but now he was about to be gathered unto them, and united with them, not in the same grave, for he was buried alone, and no one knows of his sepulcher even to this day; but he was to join them in heaven _ not as to his body, but as to his soul, which was to be united with the spirits of just men made perfect__

Like Moses, the believer shall be gathered to his people and who are his people? All the pious of his acquaintance with whom he has taken such council in the present world_ Perhaps his father is there, his mother, his brother or his sister_ there shall hail welcome home to rest__ The companions of his youth & of his ripe years. The ministry of the gospel who pointed him to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. These will be there among his people There he shall see all the antinet mothers, and see Jesus in his own kingdom who bought us with his precious blood.

Oh! If we can die under such softening circumstances as Moses did we need not fear to go. If we can die under the assurance of being gathered to our people our fathers and our friends, we may welcome the approach of death. Under such assurance the saint may sing with the past.

O! heaven! Sweet heaven! I long to be there
To meet with my Jesus & brethren so dear
Sweet spirits attend me, till Jesus shall come
Protect and defend me till I am call'd home

A glimpse of bright glory o'er powers my soul I rise in sweet vision to view the bright goal

Bright angels are whispering so sweet in my ear
Away to thy Saviour thy spirit will head

3 In the last, place, ~~Moses only died~~ the Almighty comforted Moses with the fact, that he was to be removed from earth as his brother Aaron had been_ that he was not alone in this dreary journey_ his own brother had gone before, and he was now about to fall. His foot-steps into the same heavenly country the Christian too shall be gathered like those who have gone before us_ although our feelings shrink away from the pains and degradation of death, yet let us remember that the best of saints have passed through this gloomy vale let us be willing to lie down in the cold grave lie our master, & with him we shall rise again, illustrious forms, bright as the wings of angels & lasting as the light of heaven.

In conclusion let me exhort you to imitate the example of Moses. Sacrifice every thing that may have a hinderance in your way_ Esteem the reproach of ? greater riches, than the treasures of this world_ Choose to suffer with the people, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin only for a season_
If you will thus copy the example of this eminent saint, like him you shall be gathered to your people_ to your kindred & friends

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Richmond May 6 1835
James A Riddick

From Bonlby & Weaver
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