The Birth of Moses

Chapter 2 of Exodus introduces us to Moses, the man whose life will be chronicled in the remainder of Exodus and the next 3 books of the Bible. Moses had many Christ-like qualities and like Jesus, Moses was born at a perilous time for infant Hebrew boys. Because of his fear that the Israelites were becoming too numerous, Pharaoh issued a decree that all Hebrew boys at birth should be thrown into the Nile to drown. We can see God’s hand in the events that followed Moses’ birth. God protected Moses first with godly parents (Amram and Jochebed, see 6:20) who risked their own lives to keep their son. His parents were Levites which became significant years later as the Levites were called into the priesthood with Moses’ brother Aaron chosen by God as the first high priest. Moses’ mother followed Pharaoh’s instructions literally, she threw him into the river but also made provisions for his safety. She placed him in small boat at a time when she knew that people would see him and had his older sister Miriam posted to keep watch over what would happen. Pharaoh’s daughter who according to Jewish tradition was childless, had the child rescued and decided to raise him as her own son. Miriam offered to find a Hebrew nurse for the child and God rewarded the faithfulness of his parents by returning the child to his mother to nurse him and provide a foundation for him as a Hebrew. Had Moses not been nursed by Hebrews, he may not have known about his heritage.

Moses was raised as an Egyptian and the ancient Jewish historian Josephus wrote that Moses was heir to the throne of Egypt and that while a young man he led the armies of Egypt in victorious battles against the Ethiopians. During Stephen’s recitation of the history of the Israelites, he said that *Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action* (Acts 7:23). Just as Jesus was both a man and God, Moses was both a Hebrew and an Egyptian. At 40 years of age, Moses apparently made his choice of who he would be. In Hebrews chapter 11 we read: *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time* (v. 24-25). Seeing one his people being beaten by an Egyptian, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body. As Stephen continued his discourse, he said that Moses thought his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them (Acts 7:25). Emboldened by this belief, the following day he tried to intervene in a fight between 2 Hebrew men but one of the men rebuked him and revealed that he knew Moses had killed an Egyptian. Moses fled Egypt to avoid the wrath of Pharaoh and went to Midian which was located east of the Gulf of Aqaba in what is now Saudi Arabia. This land was named for Midian who was one of 5 sons of Abraham by Keturah whom he married after the death of Sarah (Gen 25:1). He sent the sons away to the east to get them away from Isaac (Gen. 25:6). Moses met the daughters of a Midianite priest at a well (the story is similar to that of Abraham’s servant who met Isaac’s future wife at a well at Nahor (Gen. 24:15). Moses was given the daughter Zipporah as his wife and she bore him a son named Gershom. The chapter ends with God hearing the cry of the Israelites and preparing for his response.

Sometimes the Bible slows down and we read a chapter that spans days, weeks or months. At other times a chapter will cover a long period and that is the case with chapter 2. In tis chapter Moses was born, reached the age of 40 and left for Midian where he lived another 40 years. Moses thought when he was 40 that the time had come for him to lead his people out of bondage but he did not consult with God about this. Even if he had been ready, the Israelites were not ready to be led by Moses, just as they were not ready to enter Canaan for 40 years. David Guzik noted the similarity with Jesus who was also rejected by the Jews. God used the next 40 years to prepare Moses and the Israelites. Guzik wrote: *Moses probably had little idea of it at the time, but he was too big for God to use. Moses tried to do the Lord’s work in man’s wisdom and power and it didn’t work. After 40 years of seemingly perfect preparation, God had another period of preparation for both Moses and the people of Israel, to make them ready to receive Moses.* We often see ourselves as well qualified for the task at hand when in reality we are not ready. Moses went from being a man confident in his abilities to lead his people to becoming a humble servant leader 40 years later. As we read further in Exodus, we will see the humility of Moses on display.