

10-29-1967

Moses, God's Man

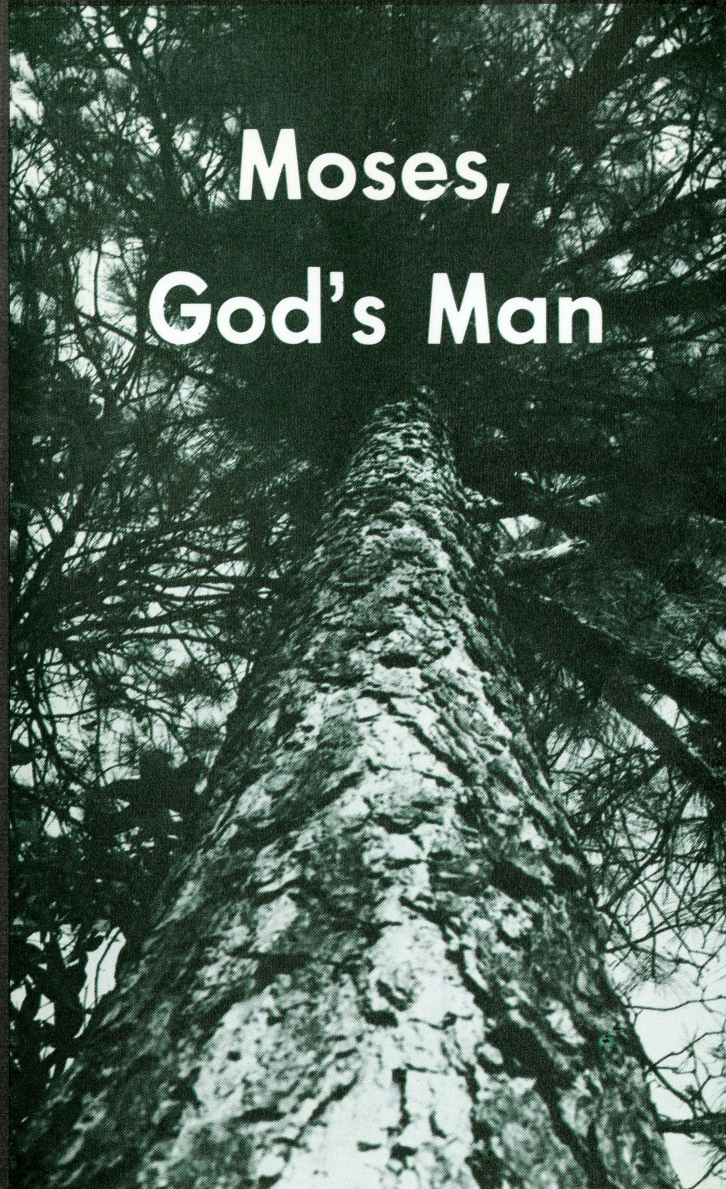
John Allen Chalk

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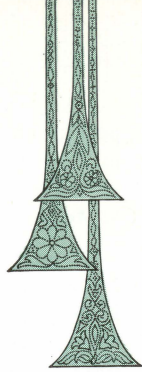
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Number 821
TRANSCRIPT OF THE

Herald of Truth

..... *radio programs*



HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST
radio program

P. O. Box 2439 Abilene, Texas 79604

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Moses, God's Man

Who would you rank as the world's greatest leader? For those of you familiar with Biblical history, let me ask, "Who do you think has been God's greatest leader?" Today, I want us to consider the life, and more especially the relationship with God, of one of the world's greatest leaders! We honor him as Israel's first and foremost public servant. We avidly study his life for his fascinating experiences with a nation in her birth throes and with a God powerful to fulfill all His purposes. In that gap between infant Israel — actually a collection of slaves just out of Egyptian bondage — and the God who elected to use them in ultimately bringing salvation to all mankind, stands "Moses — God's Man."

The New Testament *Epistle to the Hebrews* looks back on one segment of Moses' life and assesses him in this manner: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward" (Hebrews 11: 24-26).

But that's only part of the story. Courageous leadership, daring faith, bold action, genuine affection for God's

people, and a moving devotional life makes Moses a study in the purpose, meaning, direction, and strength in life that only God can give. Stay with me for the next few minutes as we study together this great man of God.

Every effective servant of God, every individual who has ever allowed God's way to be worked in his life, has personally faced God's challenge and experienced an overwhelming awareness of God. Moses is no exception! After forty years in Egypt, Moses' deep concern for his brethren in bonds precipitated a clash with an Egyptian taskmaster which resulted in the Egyptian's death (Exodus 2:11, 12). After Pharaoh heard the report of the murder, Moses decided to flee into the desert land of Midian. Here, during the next forty years, he married a Midianite woman, reared a family, and worked as a shepherd (Exodus 2:16-22).

One day, however, all this peace and tranquility was rudely jolted. Having led his flock "to the back of the wilderness" next to the mountain called Horeb or Sinai, Moses witnessed this: "And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2). Gaining Moses' attention with this unnatural demonstration, "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4). As Moses answered, "Here am I," he heard these words, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

A sense of awe filled Moses' heart at his personal meeting with God. This was no mystical phenomenon producing a superficial curiosity. Moses met God and, therefore, stood on holy ground. Wherever a man meets God, that place becomes "holy." Holy in the sense that awed respect fills one's heart and gives birth to an obedience that overwhelms the total man.

There was no mistake! This was God calling Moses. Listen to the next verse. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 9:6). With the instructions regarding his shoes and now the open declaration of who it is that speaks, no wonder "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:6).

This was Moses' first personal, authentic encounter with God — the God of history who had made Himself known to Moses' ancestors. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," he was told. Confronting the God of history, Moses had a record he could consult. Facing the God of history,

Moses saw the One who openly and willingly invites, even today, "Look at the record of my dealings with those who have loved and obeyed me."

Moses was also confronted by the God of compassion. This very meeting was occurring because of God's deep grief at the treatment Abraham's children were receiving in Egypt. He said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows" (Exodus 3:7). A God who knew, a God who saw, a God who suffered with His people — this is the One Moses now meets.

God's words, "for I know their sorrows," reminds us of Isaiah's words about Christ, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," all as the next verse in *Isaiah* 53 says, "for our transgressions," for "our peace" and healing (*Isaiah* 53:4, 5). Hundreds of years before Isaiah spoke, and even longer before the time of Christ, God knew His people's griefs and expressed His love for them. This is why He now talks with Moses.

The God who met Moses in the burning bush was the God of deliverance. All God's concern for Israel's suffering was useless without a plan for alleviating the nation's bondage. God therefore said to Moses, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). This opens the door for God's use of Moses. Now those eighty years of two completely different kinds of life, one in Egyptian royalty and the other in Midian quietness, began to take on reason — preparation for personal involvement in God's deliverance of His people.

Moses was confronted by the God who hears His people. Their cries were heard, their prayers were now being answered, unknown to them and probably according to a plan unlike anything they had suggested. And why? "And now, behold," God says, "the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression where-with the Egyptians oppress them" (Exodus 3:9). How often God's Word encourages us to call on Him for help and assures us that He will hear (*Luke* 18:1-8). He heard Israel cry out of Egypt and now prepares for their deliverance.

The God who speaks to Moses out of the burning bush is the God of power. Egypt is a mighty nation. It would be impossible for Israel to free herself from bondage. But God can overcome all foes and forces. To the children of Israel,

therefore, Moses is directed to say: "I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go" (Exodus 3:19, 20). While still in preparation for his task, Moses is told that the God who made the covenant with Abraham and his heirs was known to them not as "Jehovah" but as "God Almighty." Later when the Egyptian army pursues escaping Israel down into the dry bed of the Red Sea and are overwhelmed, they shout, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians" (Exodus 14:25).

It all fitted a glorious plan. The God, who, in former times, had actually assisted the fathers, now hears His people cry for help. Because of His compassion He delivers them out of Egyptian slavery by His own mighty power at a time when no human might could break Egypt's hold on Israel. Furthermore, Moses learns that God will provide His people a special "favor" in the eyes of the Egyptian people so that they can leave with all necessary provisions (Exodus 3:21, 22).

With this kind of confrontation, Moses had no choice but to heed God's call. The God of history, compassion, deliverance, power and provision has challenged him to return to Egypt and lead His people out of bondage. Moses went as God's spokesman and as God's chosen leader who would affect the mass exodus.

Moses went to Egypt with God's message for Israel. Here were his instructions: "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments; and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God, who bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:6, 7).

Moses also went to Egypt with God's message for Pharaoh. He was instructed: "See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exodus 7:1, 2).

Why was Moses ultimately able to bring Israel out of Egypt? There are several important factors. The ten plagues certainly convinced Pharaoh and Egypt that this God of the Israelites lived and was powerful. But at the heart of all that happened was a man — Moses. I believe

this was the key — a man who knew God and willingly allowed God to use him. But Moses' secret lay not in any special powers and gifts of his own. The greatness of Moses centered in the relationship he had with God. To put it bluntly: Moses knew God!

We only have time for a few indications of such a relationship between Moses and God. As an example, when God spoke to Israel, after their deliverance, at Mount Sinai, the people feared what they saw and heard. They asked Moses to talk with God for them. "And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (Exodus 20:21). He went into God's presence when no one else dared. Or again, it is Moses out of all Israel whom God invites to the top of the mountain to talk with Him (Exodus 24:1, 2). And later when the golden calf is built and idolatry breaks out in Israel's camp, Moses can truthfully challenge the people, "Whoso is on Jehovah's side, let him come unto me" (Exodus 32:26). When the tabernacle was completed, the place where public worship could take place, Moses entered the newly constructed tent building and, in turn, God made His presence known. Listen: "And it came to pass, when Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the tent: and Jehovah spake with Moses" (Exodus 33:9). God came to dwell in the tent, to make His presence and approval known, when Moses entered the tent! In fact, "Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). This relationship was not accidental. God also said to Moses: "thou hast found favor in my sight, and I know thee by name" (Exodus 33:17).

Moses' relationship with God was certainly helped by the two forty-day periods in which he communed with God at the top of Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:18; 34:18). Following that second period of communion with God, the Bible says that Moses' face literally glowed from his meetings with the Lord (Exodus 34:29) and that it actually became necessary for Moses to veil his face when he talked with the people (Exodus 34:33). No question but that here was a leader who knew God like no other man of his day!

One of the greatest principles that shines through Moses' life to you and me is that we can have a similar relationship with God. Moses did not have the special help of Jesus Christ. Rather than search for a burning bush experience in order to know God, the Apostle Paul says, "for through him (Christ) we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). Christ is our High Priest who knows our burdens and temptations, having faced them all in the flesh Himself. "Let us therefore draw

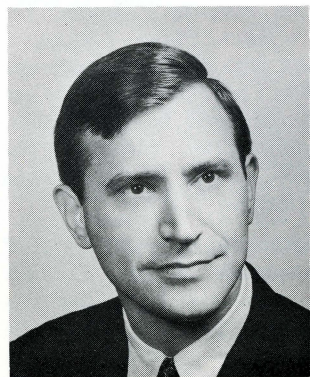
near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16). He reveals God to us, gives us the opportunity to know God, by our obedient surrender to Him (John 14:6). What I'm saying is that if Moses enjoyed a personal relationship with God, so can each one of us know Him in Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:18, 19).

But all is not perfect and flawless in Moses' life. And most of us probably need to know that. After successfully leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, and in the midst of their travels toward the new homeland, Moses disobeyed specific instructions from God. In turn, God spoke this to him: "Because ye believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Numbers 20:7-13). All those years of service and the many spiritual peaks in his life did not give Moses the liberty to disobey God.

You may also be surprised to know that Moses even attempted to excuse himself from God's use of him in Israel's deliverance. Only after giving four excuses in an attempt to escape his responsibility, did Moses surrender to God's plan for his life (Exodus 3:11, 13, 14; 4:1, 10). Life without God is not worth living, it has no purpose, no direction. Life with God offers the excitement of a daily walk with the Creator, the wonderful God of history, compassion, deliverance, power and provision — the God Moses served.

And the most important thing is that this God desires you just as He did Moses! The death of Jesus Christ signaled in the boldest possible terms God's love for you and me. If you will accept His invitation in obedient faith (John 3:36); if you will accept Jesus Christ as Savior and obey Him as Lord (Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9, 10); if you carefully follow Christ's simple but important directions to believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Him to others and put Him on in baptism (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32, 33; Galatians 3:27) the same spiritually satisfying life that Moses lived can be yours.

My hope and prayer today is that you, like Moses, will become "God's man or woman."



John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, "The Praying Christ and Other Sermons" and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville's Young Man of the Year in 1963.