

God's Mediator

Deuteronomy 5:22—6:3

by Felton Spraggins

"... if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go near and hear all that the Lord our God says; then speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.' . . ." (5:22—6:3).

At the time of our text, Moses was the greatest man Israel had ever known. He towered like a mountain peak over Israel. Had he not delivered them from bondage? Had he not led them through the wilderness and molded a heterogeneous multitude into a great and mighty nation? Had he not talked to God face to face? Was he not the one who stood between God and them to instruct and plead for them?

Moses reminded Israel of their commitment which would be necessary if he served as the future mediator between God and them. His message as the selected mediator was authoritative and binding.

MOSES' APPOINTMENT

The awesome display of God's greatness and glory at the giving of the Ten Commandments motivated the Israelites to ask Moses to be their mediator between Jehovah and themselves:

For who is there of all flesh, who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go near and hear all that the Lord our God says; then speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it (5:26, 27).

The majestic voice of Jehovah, in the midst of terrifying sights and sounds, caused the people to fear greatly. The fact that God had talked to

them and they had lived was, they believed, a miracle in itself. Never before had such a thing occurred! Out of fear they made their request known to Moses that he should serve in the unique position of mediator. The mediation was needed because they were afraid for their own interests and selfish pleasures.

When two parties are alienated, it is deemed an advantage for the parties to select a mediator. Israel requested that Moses, one chosen from their ranks, mediate between the Lord and Israel. Moses was to stand alone between God and the children of Israel.

This request of the congregation would give him the right to speak, and he, in return, would have the right to expect their loyalty. The people promised Moses that they would hear his words and obey them. This is an ideal situation for anyone given the responsibility of leadership.

God harkened to their voice and appointed Moses as a mediator. Paul referred to Moses as the mediator of the law:

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one (Galatians 3:19, 20).

God allowed Israel to return to the safety of their tents to wonder what was taking place and how it would affect them, while Moses was told by God: "But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess" (5:31).

While Moses willingly accepted the position

of mediator, it was not the result of his own ambition or choosing, but because of Jehovah's divine approval and the congregation's approval. It is only because Israel requested and God approved that Moses said, "I was standing between the Lord and you" (5:5).

MOSES' ASSIGNMENT

This selection by the people and God speaks volumes for the character and faith of Moses. Moses was not afraid to draw near to the presence of God. Every child of God should possess this wonderful attitude. James writes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

Moses was a good and superb mediator. We cannot conceive of what would have happened to Israel in subsequent years were it not for his constancy, boldness, and courage as he stood between the Israelites and the Lord.

As the mediator between God and Israel, Moses displayed a rare spirit of self-sacrifice. Remember his plea on behalf of Israel when they had worshiped the golden calf at Mount Sinai, the very place where they had requested him to be their mediator:

Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written! (Exodus 32:31, 32).

Moses as a mediator became a teacher, instructor, writer, speaker, and prophet, standing between the Lord and Israel. His words were not the production of his own spirit, but came from Jehovah. Peter spoke of the prophets' message: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Moses had not spoken out of mere human knowledge or choice. He had no right to give merely a private opinion. It was not a matter of his interpreting God's message or changing it to meet the culture of his day.

Moses as God's spokesman to Israel was moved or borne along by the Holy Spirit and brought by the Spirit to the goal of God's choosing. Moses, therefore, speaks the words and

thoughts of God, whether they relate to the past, the present, or the future.

In reference to the Old Testament writers, Paul points out that their message was inspired: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The phrase "inspired by God" is a Greek word which means literally "God-breathed." This does not merely mean, as some imply, that the Bible is an inspiring book; it means that it is the product of divine breathing through the writers.

The phrase, "All Scripture is inspired by God," literally translated reads, "Every Scripture, God breathed." Every man wrote out of his own background of time, circumstances, personality, and pattern of thought, but God spoke through each. Thus God is the actual source of the message.

Therefore, the message of Moses as mediator and prophet was inspired of God and was useful for the Israelites. His words had a distinct value for spiritual enlightenment and moral assistance for them as they planned their entrance into Canaan. Israel had all they needed to be pleasing to the Lord and to build a great nation. They were thoroughly furnished.

Inspiration, whether through the spoken word or written word, would guide and direct their every move if they would only give heed to Moses' message. If they did not hearken, they would find themselves outside their covenant relationship with God. To refuse to listen to Moses would cut them off from all communication with God.

MOSES' ANNOUNCEMENT

As mediator, Moses expressed the deepest desires of God. There is not a more moving and beautiful outburst from the heart of God in all of Deuteronomy than that found in 5:29: "Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!" The reader can sense the yearning of God's heart as He expresses His eternal wish for Israel.

First, God wants a relationship that is not

compulsory: "Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, . . ." God's greatest desire for His people has always been that they serve Him from the heart. Too many people serve out of duty without their heart ever being involved in their actions. God's commands are set forth so that we may find the greatest happiness and joy in serving Him.

Second, God wants a relationship that is continuous: ". . . and keep all My commandments always, . . ." What is needed on Israel's part is not emotion, but devotion to God's commands.

In the third place, God wants a relationship that will be forever: ". . . that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!" God has always desired that all men everywhere find eternal salvation (2 Peter 3:9).

God is always desirous of man's welfare and salvation. We have proof of this in God's glorious dealings with mankind. God not only redeemed Israel from Egypt, but delivered them through the "great and terrible wilderness." They, of all people, had been blessed by having had God give them a message that no other nation had ever been given.

The chapter closes with a stern warning by Moses to follow the Lord's commands:

So you shall observe to do just as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess (5:32, 33).

One cannot but be impressed time and again in Deuteronomy that God repeatedly promises

happiness and joy to His children if they will be obedient to Him. Israel's continued enjoyment of a habitation in "a land flowing with milk and honey" (6:3), like Adam's continued enjoyment of the original Paradise, depends on their faithful obedience to His commands.

CONCLUSION

God's ultimate plan was the salvation of all mankind through His Son who would redeem man from all sin. God even published His will so that men in every generation and every walk of life would be able to know for themselves His wondrous truths.

The mediation of Moses was a vivid type of the mediation of Christ. But it must be remembered that above all, and in all ways, Moses could never serve as the one supreme and final mediator between God and man. Christ is the only supreme Mediator.

Christ brought God to men. He brought God near to us and us near to God so that we need neither a prophet nor any supernatural being to be our mediator. "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

As Christians we are to come to "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 12:24). Whether we need comfort for the present or assurance about eternity, Christ meets our innermost needs. He is our access to God. Because He has removed our sins, which created the one barrier to God, we can have the comfort of God's presence. We can come boldly to the throne of grace in our time of need through Jesus.