

Text: Exod. 34:27-35

Title: "The miracle of Scripture and Moses's veil"

Time: 8/25/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The history of our alphabet is a fascinating study that leads eventually to ancient Egypt. Egyptologist David Rohl explains that during the time of Joseph, some genius with a Semitic background, who was familiar with Egyptian hieroglyphics, took the Egyptian symbols and created the Proto-Sinaitic letters with them (or early Hebrew).

For example, the Egyptian symbol for an ox was an oxhead, and the Hebrew word for *ox* was *aleph*, so this unknown genius called the first letter of Hebrew *aleph* and used the Egyptian oxhead symbol to write it. The Hebrew *aleph* became the Greek *alpha* in time, and that is where our *A* came from. If you turn our capital *A* upside down and add eyes, you will see the influence of the Egyptian oxhead in this history.

The Egyptian symbol for a house was a rectangle on its side with an opening on one side for a door. The Hebrew word for house is *beth*, and that is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which became the Greek *beta* and our letter *B*. Intrigued, Rohl comments: "This simple idea formed the original basis of the modern alphabet that billions of people around the world use today in their everyday lives . . . all down to the invention of one individual – an anonymous Semite living in Egypt at the time of Amenemhat III who knew how to read Egyptian hieroglyphs" (*Exodus – Myth or History?*, 217).

This same Egyptologist, though a professed agnostic, believes that the genius in question was the biblical Joseph of Genesis, known to Egyptian history as the great Anaku. Rohl understands the significance of his conclusion when it comes to the Bible's claim that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible: "The Bible credits Moses with the authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah or Pentateuch). Most

scholars dismiss this as unhistorical. However, I think it is entirely possible for Moses, the literate prince of Egypt, educated by the royal nursery . . . in the inner palace . . . , to have kept logs during the Israelite wanderings in the wilderness and written laws using the Proto-Sinaitic alphabet script based on Egyptian hieroglyphs” (219).

Our passage is about the writing of Moses. He has returned to Sinai to write a second copy of the Ten Commandments to replace the original that God had written with His own finger (vv. 27-28). He does so with the early Hebrew alphabet invented by Joseph, and more importantly, Moses does so at the command of the Lord (v. 27a). The Lord’s command is critical, because what Moses wrote were not just the letters of Joseph and the words of Moses. They were the laws of God.

2 Peter 1:20, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture [the written Word of God] is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” We believe that when men wrote at God’s command under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it was also God who was writing. And our passage combines these truths of inspiration as well. Verses 27-28 tell us that Moses wrote the second copy. Verse 1 of the chapter tells us that God said He would write the second copy. It is the miracle of Scripture that both are true. The words written in our Bibles are the very words of both the human authors and their God.

And so, this passage is at its core a passage about a miraculous text of Scripture, written by Moses and the Word of God. This morning, I would like to notice three things it teaches us about the wonderful miracle of Scripture, the Bibles that you and I hold in our hands this morning.

I. The miracle of Scripture tells us God’s promise of salvation (vv. 27-28).

Illustration: These verses mention a covenant or promise. When a couple gets married, they exchange vows or promises, because marriage is a holy covenant.

Application: From the Lord's point of view, the Ten Commandments are a written promise from the Him to the nation of Israel. We think of them merely as commandments, a list of thou-shalts and thou-shalt-nots — obey, or else. The Lord does not see them like that. The Lord sees them as the way He wants His people to respond to His covenant with them.

The promises of the commandments in Exodus 20 include verse 6, where the Lord assures them the He shows “mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” The Lord sees the need for love first, then obedience, in this covenantal relationship. Even the law of the Sabbath was for their good health and rest (v. 11): “Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Why honor your father and your mother and obey your parents? “That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” (It was lots of land, by the way.)

The Ten Commandments begin with the Lord identifying Himself this way: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod. 20:2). It is this covenant of love that delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt and made them His free people. The shalt and shalt-nots are all built on this foundational truth, the Lord is their Redeemer who freed them from their slavery. And we must remember that God did so through the sacrifice of the Passover little lambs.

So these words along with the rest of our Bibles tell us about our Redeemer and His Passover Lamb, whose work frees us from the Egyptian slavery of our sin and all its consequences. 1 Cor. 5:7, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” For that reason, we too must be a law-abiding people. Paul tells this troubled church, “Cleanse out the old leaven that you

may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened." You are free from sin, now exit the prison doors and live like it. What freed prisoner prefers to stay in jail with doors flung wide open?

The miracle of Scripture tells us of God's promise of salvation, that He sent His Son to die for our sins like a Passover lamb, so that we could be free from slavery to sin, forgiven, cleansed, born anew, and alive with eternal life.

Verse 28 tells us of Moses's 40 days and nights of fasting on Sinai with the Lord. Jesus was in the wilderness tempted by the devil for 40 days and nights while fasting. One of the reasons Jesus did that was to show us that the Lord had sent Him to be the fulfillment of Deut. 18:18, God's promise to send a prophet like Moses, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

Jesus repeats Moses's 40 days and nights to show that He is that promised prophet who was like Moses. He is better than Moses, for Moses fasted on Sinai with the Lord, whereas Jesus fasted in the wilderness facing Satan.

II. The miracle of all Scripture has a message for all (vv. 29-32).

Illustration: Around 10:00 pm Tuesday evening, I noticed some headlights in our church parking lot after dark. I peered out the window, and there was a pickup truck that had met up with another car just in front of our modular building.

My wife and I were on our way to bed, but I did not feel comfortable doing so while these vehicles were just outside our home. I turned on our house outside light, and as soon as I did, my wife heard some expletives coming from the vehicles, after which they both raced away out of our parking lot. It is amazing how a little unexpected light can create fear for those in darkness.

Application: Moses descends Sinai this second time with an unexpected miraculous light shining from his face. His face shone because the Lord had spoken with him, yet the people feared.

Although the shine from Moses's face was supernatural, Scripture does speak to the importance of a person's natural countenance. Gen. 4:5 tells us, "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance was fallen." Jacob began to worry for his family's wellbeing because of the countenance of his father-in-law in Gen. 31:2, "And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before." Conversely, Hannah's countenance changed for the better when the Lord heard her prayer for a child, "So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Sam. 1:18). This morning, I see your countenance and you see mine, and I mention all this because what we see is important to the Lord. He sees us too.

Ps. 43:5 tells us that the Lord desires us to have a healthy, hopeful countenance: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Prov. 15:13 says, "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."

Moses's supernatural countenance undoubtedly reflected a heart that was merry. God had spoken His mercy and forgiveness to Him, in spite of Israel's great sin, and this forgiveness delighted his heart. Surely, as we have come to hear from the Lord this morning of His saving grace, our countenance should show our sense of joy at this great privilege.

Behind the joyful shining of his countenance, Moses had a message for Israel. But he had trouble communicating this message at first because the people feared the joy and its supernatural shine (v. 30). It is often true that the word that sinners need comes to them with an unusual glory that makes sinners uncomfortable at first. Still, all of God's promise of salvation and its commandments were for all the people (v. 32).

Moses delivers the message first to some leaders (v. 31), and then to the rest of the people (v. 32). Aaron and these others provide an important example of leadership here. The rest of Israel got the message from God as they followed the leaders' example of hearing from Moses.

God's message still needs those leading hearers today, who will come faithfully to hear and invite others who need to hear to come with them, people who believe that the miracle of all Scripture has a message for all. Do you believe this? Will you lead? Or are you fearful that there is an uncomfortable gleam that comes from what we are doing here this morning?

III. The miracle of Scripture is a tool of the Holy Spirit (vv. 33-35; 2 Cor. 3:12-18).

Illustration: In April 2008 the US Congress issued a 208 page "Report of the Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Attack." The report made clear that a nuclear blast above the United States could cause widespread failure of our electrical grid, and it made some recommendations about how to respond if the lights go out. Key to the recommendations was the need to organize communication networks apart from the electrical grid.

Application: Our passage mentions the way Moses used a veil to turn out the light that shone from his face. When the Apostle Paul read this passage, he did not merely see a veil; rather, he saw a spiritual EMP attack that he describes in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18. Paul says there that it is possible to have what Moses wrote and to read what Moses wrote, but to understand what you read no better than a blind man trying to read it would (v. 14). He says that this inability to read Moses is like the inability of the Israelites to hear Moses when the veil was over Moses's face (v. 15).

The same is true of every reader of Moses who tries to make sense of the Bible on his own. There is a spiritual EMP attack

turning the lights out on us, which is illustrated by Moses's veil, and Paul tells us more clearly what happened in 2 Cor. 4:3-4. The god of this world has put a veil between the miracle of Scripture and the human heart, causing the human heart to be blind to what the Bible says.

What can be done about this? 3:14b-18 has the answer. First, understand that the veil no longer exists only when we can see Christ when we read Moses (3:14c, 4:4). The shine from Moses's face is like the shine of the gospel of Christ. It can only be seen in the books of Moses when the veil is removed.

So, who can remove the veil? 3:16-17 tells us who. When our hearts turn to the sovereign Lord, who is the Holy Spirit, then are we free from the blindness and the veil. Then we can see Moses with his face open, with the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ shining through, and seeing that glorious gospel saves us from our sins and causes us to grow into the image of the Christ we see. In this way, the miracle of Scripture must be a tool of the Holy Spirit. We must turn to Him as Lord to have His help seeing Christ on its pages in a way that changes us to be more like Him. Is the Holy Spirit your Lord? Have you had that help to see Christ in Moses?

Conclusion: Paul's reference to the Holy Spirit as the Lord or Sovereign in this passage reminded me of an essay A.W. Tozer wrote titled, "How to be filled with the Holy Spirit." Whenever asked if we would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we always say yes, but Tozer emphasizes something we often miss as we think of this filling. He asks, "Do you want Him to be the Lord of your life? That you want His benefits, I know. I take that for granted. But do you want to be possessed by Him? Do you want to hand the keys of your soul over to the Holy Spirit and say, 'Lord, from now on I don't even have a key to my own house. I come and go as Thou tellest me'? . . .

"Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will expect obedience to the written and living

Word? Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will not tolerate the self sins? . . .

“Again, I ask you if you desire to have your personality taken over by One who stands in sharp opposition to the world’s easy ways? No tolerance of evil, no smiling at crooked jokes, no laughing off things that God hates. The Spirit of God, if He takes over, will bring you into opposition to the world just as Jesus was brought into opposition to it. . . . Are you sure, brother? You want His help, yes; you want a lot of His benefits, yes; but are you willing to go with Him in His opposition to the easygoing ways of the world? If you are not, you needn’t apply for anything more than you have, because you don’t want Him; you only think you do!”

How shall we answer honestly this morning? What will we do with the miracle of Scripture and its promise of salvation for all? Will the Holy Spirit be our Lord who removes the veil from our eyes?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching