

## Moses(1)

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### Introduction

In our studies of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Joseph, we've seen God's gradual plan for establishing a nation that that would be separate from all the other nations. The garden of Eden was a type, or foreshadowing of the future kingdom of heaven on earth when Christ is King of kings because it was a place of perfection and where the Lord was present. As we learned from Paul in I Corinthians 15:45-47, Adam himself was a type of Christ—he was referred to as the first man while Christ is the second or last man. Through God's revealed plan in Genesis and onward, specifically beginning with His promise to Abraham, we see that God would have a nation unto Himself that would dwell in the land of His choosing—a promised land (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-7). Genesis closes with the family of Jacob (also known as Israel) in Egypt, which is the beginning of the establishment of the nation of Israel.

The next main character in the Bible is Moses. There is too much in Scripture about Moses for me to cover in the next series of lessons, but I hope to hit the highlights and provide enough references for you to read on your own time if desired. Apart from God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I believe that Moses and Paul are the two most important persons in the Bible. It was through the prophet Moses that God revealed His righteous Law to the people of Israel and led them to their promised land, and it was through the Apostle Paul that God revealed His previously hidden eternal purpose and plan—the mystery and its gospel of grace—to the world. I hope this study conveys the importance of Moses.

Because of the prevalent use of personal pronouns by the writer, we know that Moses wrote the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy while the nation of Israel sojourned in the wilderness (the region between Egypt and their promised land in Canaan) after escaping Egypt. I am convinced, as are many others, that Moses also wrote Genesis by the inspiration of God.<sup>1</sup>

### Setting the Stage for Moses

Joseph and his brothers all died in Egypt. Their descendants—the descendants of Jacob—continued to multiply and became mighty throughout the land of Egypt (Exodus 1:6-7). We don't know how many Pharaohs (kings) lived during Joseph's lifetime in Egypt, but after his death a king rose up who didn't know anything about Joseph and what he had done for Egypt. This new Pharaoh feared the people of Israel, thinking that they would join with Egypt's enemies and fight against Egypt. Consequently, he essentially enslaved them by forcing them to do hard labor in service of Pharaoh (Exodus 1:8-14).

To slow down the population growth of the people of Israel, Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives who served him (Shiphrah and Puah, who apparently were in charge of all of the midwives) to put to death Israelite boys when they helped the mothers give birth. The midwives feared (honored) God and disobeyed Pharaoh by letting the boys live. Pharaoh asked the midwives why they were letting the boys

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God, so a writer did not need to be an eyewitness to record events, conversations, or thoughts (II Timothy 3:16-17). One clue for me that Moses wrote Genesis is in Genesis 2:8 where it says that God planted a garden *to the east* in Eden. To me, the writer is telling the people of Israel that Eden was somewhere east of where they were currently residing, which would have been in the wilderness while Moses was leading Israel.

live, and they deceptively said that the Israelite women were vigorous, unlike the Egyptian women, and gave birth before the midwives could get to them (Exodus 1:15-19).

God blessed Shiphrah and Puah for disobeying Pharaoh. Consequently, the people of Israel continued to multiply and God established households for the midwives (i.e., their social status improved). However, Pharaoh then commanded all the people of Israel to cast their newborn sons into the Nile, but they could keep their daughters (Exodus 1:20-22).

### **Takeaways**

Shiphrah and Puah did two things that bear further investigation:

1. They disobeyed Pharaoh by allowing the newborn Hebrew boys to live.
2. They lied to Pharaoh about what they were doing by saying the Hebrew women were giving birth before the midwives could attend the births.

Both of these actions are contrary to what we know as commandments of God. We are to obey those who are in governing authority over us because they are in their position by the will of God, whether elected, self-appointed, or otherwise (1 Peter 2:13-17).<sup>2</sup> Also, we are not to bear false witness against our neighbor (Exodus 20:16) or lie to one another (Ephesians 4:25, 31). Therefore, it appears that Shiphrah and Puah were sinning against God. And yet, God blessed them. Why?

**Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities [higher powers]. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.** (Romans 13:1-7)

**Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.** (Colossians 3:9)

### ***Disobedience of Governing Authority***

Although the passages in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 do not speak of exceptions for disobeying our governing authorities, we have other examples of exceptions in Scripture:

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not bow down to the idol of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon knowing that they would be cast into a blazing furnace if they didn't. They did not know that God would miraculously keep them from harm (Daniel 3:8-30).
- Contrary to a law of King Darius of Babylon, Daniel prayed to God and was cast into a lion's den for doing so. He did not know that God would miraculously keep him from harm (Daniel 6).

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<sup>2</sup> See my study **Governing Authority** that addresses this subject and how we should respond today.

- Peter and John defied the Jewish religious leaders when ordered not to teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:1-20) and, soon after, apparently all of the apostles were briefly imprisoned for continuing to teach the message of Jesus (Acts 5:17-42). Although the religious leaders did not have governing authority, they had the authority to turn them over to the Roman government as they did with Jesus and later with Paul. Furthermore, it is likely that the apostles would have defied Roman authorities had they given the same order.

In each of these examples, these men would have been disobeying commandments of God (i.e., sinning against Him) had they obeyed the commands of their authorities.

**When they [the temple guard] had brought them [the apostles], they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on the cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:27-31).**

### ***Lying***

Likewise, we have another example in Scripture where lying appears to be acceptable to God and is honored by Him. Rahab sheltered the two spies whom Joshua had sent to search the land of Jericho. The king of Jericho heard of this and sent men to Rahab's home to apprehend the spies. She admitted that two men had come to her, but lied by saying they had left when in truth she was protecting them because she feared the Lord God of Israel (Joshua 2).

### ***Conclusions***

Not only is all Scripture inspired by God, but we are exhorted to rightly divide it; that is, we are to handle it accurately (II Timothy 2:15). There are many verses and passages in the Bible that appear to be absolute if considered by themselves. However, we must be careful to examine the context and take all of Scripture into consideration before drawing a firm conclusion. As shown above, there are exceptions to what initially appears to be conclusive commands to obey those in authority and to not lie. Please consider the following conclusions regarding these particular subjects.

- **Governing Authority:**

We are authorized by God to disobey our governing authorities if what they demand or require of us is contrary to the will of God. That is, we would be sinning against God by obeying them. Although many laws and our constitutional rights in the United States *allow* people to legally sin (e.g., gambling; fornication, adultery, and other sexual immoralities; slander; worshiping anyone or anything as desired; drunkenness apart from driving; etc.), I am not aware of any current federal laws that require or force an American citizen to sin against God. However, such laws exist in other nations and could easily be implemented here.

Although we can and should disobey laws or requirements that would force us to sin, we must humbly accept the consequences for doing so that might include fines, imprisonment, or death. However, we don't have Scriptural support for justifying rising up against our governing authorities (e.g., through

disorderly or violent protests or through revolution). The world is ungodly, and we are not instructed to change it by trying to make it conform to the laws of God (Romans 8:5-8; I Corinthians 2:12-14; II Corinthians 4:1-4; Ephesians 2:1-3). Instead, we are to live uprightly as ambassadors for Christ, live quiet lives (without public conflicts or drawing attention to ourselves), and flee from sin and the appearance of evil (II Corinthians 5:20; II Timothy 2:20-26; I Thessalonians 5:21-22).

- Lying:

Bearing false witness against someone is always wrong because it involves lying or slander for the purpose of hurting or gaining some type of advantage over that person or a particular group of people. For example, the religious leaders Israel bore false witness against Jesus and Stephen, among other disciples of Jesus, for the purpose of ending their ministries (Matthew 26:59-64; 27:11-14; Acts 6:8-14).

Similarly, lying to protect ourselves is also wrong, as demonstrated by Cain, Abraham, and Peter among many others in the Bible (Genesis 4:8-9; 12:10-20; Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75). However, lying to protect someone who is innocent is acceptable and honored by God. Shiphrah and Puah were blessed by God for protecting the lives of the newborn Israelite boys. If they had obeyed Pharaoh, they would have been committing murder. Rahab was also blessed by God for lying about the whereabouts of the Israelite spies who were sent by Joshua to reconnoiter a portion of the land promised to the people of Israel by God (Hebrews 11:31).

The accounts of the Hebrew midwives and Rahab are the only two instances I am aware of in Scripture where lying was honored by God. Therefore, we must be very careful before even considering to lie (or justifying a lie). There have been, and may still be, situations where God would honor a lie. For example, if any believers lied (at the risk of their own lives) to protect Jews or other *undesirable* people from the Nazi authorities, God likely honored them. We must always remember, however, that it is impossible for God to lie (the godhead is truth—Hebrews 6:17-18; John 14:6, 16-17), that Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44), and that we are not to lie to one another for any reason that would harm them or gain an advantage for ourselves.

**Therefore, laying aside falsehood [lying], speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.** (Ephesians 4:25)