

Moses and the Mark of the Beast

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The Moses Murder Mystery

The life of Moses could be divided into three distinct segments of 40 years each: The first segment began with his birth and ended with him murdering an Egyptian taskmaster. The next segment began when Moses escaped from Egypt and ended when he returned to Egypt.

The final segment of his life began with the Exodus and ended when he died.

Except for his miraculous escape from death shortly after he was born, the Bible gives minimal information about Moses' first 40 years. (See Exodus 1 and 2.) The Bible does not reveal how Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses or provide additional insight about his time in Pharaoh's house.

We do know, however, that when Moses grew to be a man, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (Hebrews 11:24) The reason Moses murdered the Egyptian taskmaster remains a mystery to me. Did Moses kill the Egyptian out of a sense of injustice or was Moses simply looking for a way to gain respect from his Hebrew brothers?

The circumstances surrounding the murder happened this way: One day Moses left the comforts of Pharaoh's palace to see for himself how his Hebrew brothers were fairing under the agony of slavery.

He came upon an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave and believing that no one was watching (Exodus 2:12), Moses killed the Egyptian and quickly buried the corpse in the sand. However, another Hebrew witnessed the event and word of the murder spread like a wildfire through the Hebrew camp. Moses feared for his life and fled to the desert to escape Pharaoh's wrath.

For the next segment of 40 years, Moses lived in the desert as a fugitive. While working for minimum wages (tending sheep) in the hostile environment of the desert, Moses discovered two essential elements of life: A *patient* faith in God and contentment. The stark surroundings of the desert with its unforgiving lessons of survival taught Moses more about depending on the Lord than he could have ever learned while living in Pharaoh's palace. Moses also discovered the power and joy of love when he cared for the sheep.

Ultimately, the first 80 years of his life prepared Moses for the finest and final segment of his life. His education in Pharaoh's schools and his re-education in the desert combined in a unique way to make him one of the world's finest servant leaders.

The Servant Leader

Being a servant leader is quite difficult because the attitudes of a servant and the attitudes of a leader are constantly at war against each other for mastery. The "leader" uses authority and control to meet objectives, but the "servant" uses love to get the job done.

The servant leader exalts the welfare and development of his or her subjects equal to that of the objectives. In other words, the servant aspect of leadership is willing to miss objectives (or profits) to improve and develop the members of the group, whereas the leader aspect of leadership is willing to sacrifice members of the group to meet the objectives!

In practice, this balance is very hard to manage and Moses often failed in his attempt to be a servant leader. Remember the time he impatiently struck a rock to obtain water when God had commanded him to speak to it? (Numbers 20:8-12) That impatient act prevented Moses from entering the promised land. I find it ironic that Moses had to flee from Pharaoh's palace because of an impulsive act and he also failed to enter the promised land due to his impulsive nature.

After Moses was gone for 40 years, God forced him to return to Egypt. The Lord's anger burned against Moses because he resisted God's command at the burning bush to return to Egypt! (Exodus 4:14) Shortly after the burning bush episode, Moses made the Lord so angry that the Lord was prepared to kill Moses.

In that case, Moses' wife, Zipporah, saved him from God's wrath! (Exodus 4:24) When Moses arrived in Egypt, he was a much different man than when he left. Moses had left Egypt with an attitude of a leader, but he returned 40 years later with an attitude of a servant. A tremendous difference lies between the egocentric attitude of the young Moses and the theo-centric attitude of Moses at age 80. It took 40 years of tending sheep to transform Moses into a meek man. When Moses finally learned how to follow The Good Shepherd, God promoted Moses to be a shepherd of God's people.

A Man without a Country

When Moses arrived back in Egypt after his 40-year wilderness sojourn, he did not have the respect of the Hebrew elders. No doubt, some of the elders remembered that Moses was a fugitive from justice. This made it necessary for God to use miraculous signs through Moses in the presence of the elders.

Otherwise, the elders would have rejected Moses and the message he presented. (Exodus 4:30,31) From our vantage point today, it is interesting that even after directing a miraculous exodus from Egypt using great displays of God's power, his people still did not respect Moses. There is a simple reason for this: The carnal mind does not understand the spiritual mind. God used 40 years in the wilderness to transform Moses into a spiritual man. In the carnal world, leaders (politicians) must maneuver so a majority of important people constantly admire them or they will be out of a job.

When Moses returned to Egypt, he did not promote himself to be a savior of the Hebrews, nor did he seek followers or popularity. He did not arrive with an entourage of servants nor did he

command a mighty army prepared to defeat Pharaoh. Moses arrived in Egypt as a servant of God.

Moses explained to the elders that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had sent him back to Egypt to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery. To verify Moses' claim, God worked several miracles through him. (Exodus 4:29-31) After seeing the miracles, the elders believed.

Background

The story of Moses offers several end time parallels that are important to consider. Interestingly, the parallels found in the lives of Moses, Pilate, Saul, Esther, Gideon, Daniel and others were recorded in the Bible for *our* benefit! (1 Corinthians 10:11)

For a point of reference, our background study on Moses should begin with Jacob the great-great grandfather of Moses. Jacob had twelve sons and his favorite son was Rachel's first son, Joseph. (Remember, Jacob worked fourteen years to acquire Rachel from Laban. See Genesis 29.)

When Joseph was seventeen, his envious brothers sold him to Midianite merchants for 20 pieces of silver. These merchants took Joseph to Egypt and sold him there as a slave. (Genesis 37:28) In spite of this great injustice, Joseph remained faithful to God, and God wonderfully blessed Joseph through some very tough experiences.

About 23 years after his brothers sold Joseph as a slave, the king of Egypt released him from prison and promoted him to the position of Prime Minister of Egypt. This sudden promotion occurred because God enabled Joseph to interpret a dream that God specifically gave to Pharaoh. Pharaoh's dream predicted seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. God warned Pharaoh of an approaching famine through Joseph, and Pharaoh was so pleased to know the meaning of his dream that he elevated Joseph to his new position.

After seven years of bountiful harvests, the sun began to scorch the Earth and the famine was severe and widespread. The famine also reached Canaan and about two years later, Jacob and his eleven sons ran out of food. In desperation, Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy food. Through a series of events, Jacob's sons discovered their little brother, Joseph, was the Prime Minister of Egypt. Imagine their great fear and panic! In one of the greatest acts of compassion ever recorded, Joseph forgave his brothers and insisted that his father and all of his brothers move to Egypt.

Knowing the famine would last five more years, Joseph moved his father and brothers to the region of Goshen and the children and grandchildren of Jacob (Israel) flourished in Egypt.

One of Jacob's twelve sons, Levi, had a son named Kohath. Now, follow the genealogy Kohath had a son named Amram, and Amram was the father of Aaron and Moses. This Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses genealogy is important to this story because Moses knew as a youngster that *his generation the fourth generation* was the generation scheduled to be freed from Egyptian

slavery!

Review the original promise that God gave to Abraham many years earlier: **"Then the Lord said to him, Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. *In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.*"** (Genesis 15:13-16, italics mine)

The Fourth Generation

I hope you have read the Bible account describing how God miraculously used Pharaoh's daughter to rescue baby Moses from the river and adopt him. (Exodus 2) Growing up in the palace of Pharaoh and learning about his miraculous rescue at birth could put all kinds of ideas in a young man's mind.

I am sure that as Moses grew into manhood, he probably concluded that *he* was a man of destiny. Moses could easily have concluded that God had chosen *him* to deliver Israel from Pharaoh's control and lead His people into Canaan to inherit the land God promised Abraham. I believe these ideas were probable because at that time, Moses was the only Hebrew in the world who was not a slave.

Moses also was aware that he belonged to the fourth generation and knew God had promised Abraham that the fourth generation in Egypt would return to Canaan and inherit the land! Evidently these thoughts led Moses to conclude that *he* was the one who would set his people free. However, one pivotal problem with Moses' conclusion was that the slaves had no respect for Moses. They lived in the ghetto of Goshen and every day they endured terrible suffering as slaves. Conversely, Moses had lived in Pharaoh's palace and enjoyed the best things that money could buy.

No matter what Moses thought and though Moses refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter (Hebrews 11:24,25), the other Hebrews did not regard Moses *as one of them!* Moses probably knew about this alienation and set out to prove to his kinsmen that he really identified with them and their suffering. Part of Moses' motivation for killing the Egyptian may have been the strained relationship between Moses and his identification with his people. However, the murder was a rash decision and it did not enamor Moses to his people.

In reality, his action ultimately proved to everyone that he was not very smart. The very next day, when Moses realized that (a) his own people had no interest in mounting an insurrection against Pharaoh by following his example, and (b) Pharaoh would probably sentence him to death for unlawfully killing an Egyptian, Moses decided it was in his best interest to disappear from Egypt.

His grand illusion of delivering the Hebrews from slavery simply evaporated as he fled into the

isolation of the desert to save himself from certain death.

End Time Parallel

With God, timing is everything. God did not need Moses to deliver *His* people from slavery. God could have exercised any one of thousands of options to deliver His people. This brings up an interesting point about faith. I believe Moses was like Abraham. Moses wanted to deliver his people from slavery, but God's larger plans for the Exodus included several object lessons between Himself and Pharaoh. Of course, Moses did not know about God's larger picture and Moses' finite view of God's plans led to his failure.

This is always the human problem. - Remember the case of adultery between Abraham and Hagar? Abraham and Sarah schemed to fulfill God's plan by violating their marriage covenant. Moses attempted to fulfill God's magnificent plans by killing an Egyptian. *Like Abraham, Moses sincerely believed in God, but both men failed because they would not wait for God to resolve the situation!* Moses violated God's law by killing the Egyptian and consequently, he had 40 years of solitary isolation! As a fugitive in the harsh setting of a desert prison, Moses learned submission and total dependence on God. Moses discovered the practical meaning of faith and learned *how* to wait so that God could fulfill His higher purposes for Moses. (Waiting for God is one of the most difficult lessons to learn. James 1:4) When God concluded that Moses' spiritual life had reached a satisfactory level of maturity, He called Moses to do a special work for Him and Moses submitted to God's plan.

There is a profound end time parallel here. During the Great Tribulation, each person will face a question of survival. As the issue of survival becomes all-consuming, *the human solution* will stand opposing *the divine solution*. (Our ways are often contrary to God's ways, because God's ways are not like our ways.)

For example, the Bible makes it clear that a severe famine will occur during the Great Tribulation and food supplies will be scarce. So, in the face of death, does hunger justify stealing? The juxtaposition between starvation and stealing forces each of us to take a tough look at the principles we honestly maintain. If we answer "yes" to the question that hunger justifies stealing, then our principles are no different from the principles of thugs who currently roam and loot the world.

They steal because they do not have what they want and do not trust God to provide for their needs. Do not stop there take the question one step further. Does hunger justify killing? If we answer "yes," then we are no different from Moses whose impulsive act killed the Egyptian.

The point is that submission to God means submission to *God's control of the situation* and in some cases this means submission to the point of death. (Remember the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace?) Here is a truth to consider: *Calvary proves that Jesus would not participate in wrong doing (unrighteousness) to sustain His own life (and neither should those who honor Him)! (See Matthew 4.)*

The Great Tribulation is just before us, so carefully consider these words from Revelation 13:10: **"If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."**

Reread that last sentence. This text is directed at God's people during the Great Tribulation and it indicates that many of God's people will be imprisoned *without* justification. Also, many of God's people will be killed *without* justification. So, get ready children of God.

This world is full of injustice and it will be directed our way soon! God's Word has declared the course of coming events so that our faith in God might remain steady. God's people need *patient endurance and faithfulness!* God knows the future and He already knows the outcome for each of us.

Obviously, we do not know how our particular future will unfold, but that is not our concern. Our concern is to remain faith-full to God and the principles of His kingdom today even to the point of death!

Moses before Pharaoh

The first time Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh, they presented a small *demand*. Notice that God did not demand something from Pharaoh that would destroy his nation's economy. God merely demanded a three day leave of absence, that is all. ". . . **Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert."** Pharaoh said, **Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.**" (Exodus 5:1,2)

Pharaoh's response immediately revealed his heart! Although Pharaoh has been dead for a long time, his words and attitude live on. The *carnal response* of the human heart when brought face to face with the sovereign will of God remains unchanged: **"Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?"**

God did not offer to negotiate with Pharaoh. Instead, God confronted Pharaoh with a direct order, **"Let my people go. . . ."** During the Great Tribulation, God will confront the people of Earth with a direct order, ". . . **Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. *Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.***" (Revelation 14:7, italics mine) Moses and Aaron were to Pharaoh what the 144,000 will be to the world during the Great Tribulation.

God will empower and send His servants throughout the world to proclaim the everlasting gospel. The gospel of Christ commands everyone to worship the Creator. This means that we should structure our lives to incorporate the Ten Commandments, which includes His seventh day Sabbath. God's point-blank declaration will produce a similar response to that of Pharaoh in

many people. They will say, "**Who is the Lord, that I should obey him. . . .**"

Remember that it took ten plagues to ravage Egypt before Pharaoh's rebellion temporarily softened. Pharaoh's behavior should hold special meaning for students of Bible prophecy, especially for individuals who want to understand the use of "Sodom and Egypt" in Revelation 11:8. Notice the text: "**Their bodies [e.g., the two witnesses] will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.**"

Consider why the Bible refers to Sodom and Egypt in Revelation 11. These two entities, Sodom and Egypt, describe the mind set of the wicked at the time of the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19) marks the close of the offer of salvation.

When the seventh trumpet sounds in Heaven, God will have separated the people of Earth into two groups (sheep and goats). God will seal one group with His seal and the other group will have received the mark of the beast. The group that receives the mark of the beast will have the same defects in their character as the ancient inhabitants of Sodom and Egypt.

Sodom represents a class of people who cannot discern right from wrong. The Sodomites *were inebriated with sexual immorality* and they vigorously promoted their degenerate ways. The consciences of the Sodomites and the inhabitants who lived in the cities around Sodom were cauterized as with a hot iron. As a result, God's patient forbearance with them ended and He burned Sodom, Gomorrah and several adjacent cities to the ground with a meteorite shower of burning hail and sulfur. (Genesis 13:13; 19:24-29)

Egypt, on the other hand, represents a class of people who defiantly refuse to submit to God's authority. Like Pharaoh, Egypt represents a group of people who will refuse to render obedience to Almighty God, even after they have heard God's demands!

The terms, Sodom and Egypt, represent a point in time when divine forbearance with the wicked has no redemptive effect. When God's subjects have reached that point, God can do no more to save them. Therefore, God will destroy the wicked, just as He did in Pharaoh's day. Think about this: A Sovereign is not sovereign as long as rebellion exists! This is why God will ultimately destroy sin itself! (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

From Pharaoh's Point of View

It is quite possible to read a page in the Bible and overlook some essential points that are on that page. People who have studied the Bible at length know what I mean. Words are a means to convey thoughts and thoughts are the language of the Spirit! I mention this because I would like to present Pharaoh's response to Aaron and Moses from Pharaoh's point of view.

Of course, I have speculated about some details in the story that are not found in Scripture, however, I have conscientiously tried to keep the added information consistent with the historical setting.

One morning, as Pharaoh Amenhotep II was sitting on his throne and overseeing the business of his expansive kingdom, his court secretary informed him that two Hebrews, Aaron and Moses, were present and wanted to speak with him. The king was pleased to hear that these two men wanted to meet with him. Pharaoh had heard rumors about Aaron and Moses and he wanted to confront them! Pharaoh concluded this was a fine opportunity that was knocking at his door.

Ordinarily, slaves were denied access to Pharaoh, since they belonged to the lowest order of Egyptian culture. In Pharaoh's government, lieutenants who managed slaves reported to governors who oversaw the day-to-day operations of the kingdom. If any lieutenant or governor allowed the king to suffer loss, Pharaoh executed or publicly humiliated them. Such was the harsh, but highly effective management style of Amenhotep II.

Pharaoh wanted to meet with Aaron and Moses because he had received reports that revealed that these two men had convinced many slaves to rest from their labors on the seventh day of the week. Rebellion is an alarming development for any king, but Pharaoh was, for the moment, more curious than furious at this recent development among the slaves. He wanted to know what was going on.

So, Pharaoh invited these two elderly men from Goshen into his court. Evidently, Amenhotep II did not know that Moses had killed an Egyptian 40 years earlier. If Amenhotep II had known, the Egyptians would have arrested Moses on the spot as a fugitive from justice.

Pharaoh had heard rumors that Moses had supernatural powers and that he could perform miracles. Pharaoh wanted to see Moses himself and verify if this was true. (Exodus 4:29-31) Pharaoh also knew about a prophecy circulating among the slaves that their God had given to their patriarch, Abraham, which stated that Abraham's descendants would serve as slaves in Egypt for 400 years.

According to rumor, the slaves believed their 400 years of slavery was about to end. The timing of these reports and the notoriety surrounding Moses aroused Pharaoh's curiosity, so he allowed Aaron and Moses to meet with him.

As Aaron and Moses approached the elevated throne, Pharaoh looked down on two men in their eighties. They were humble and polite; not arrogant or hostile. They respectfully bowed before the king and after expressing appreciation for the audience, they presented the *demand* of their God: ". . . **This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.**" (Exodus 5:1)

Pharaoh was not prepared to hear a demand from two slaves. No doubt he reacted much like any king would have reacted. Kings typically have huge egos and "demands" are something they give not something they receive. Pharaoh did not expect the sheer boldness of Aaron and Moses.

Pharaoh expected these two slaves to have an attitude closer to begging or groveling. After all, a couple of slaves were talking to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Even more, as a matter of court

etiquette, a person does not demand something of a Sovereign. Even Esther humbly *asked* her husband, King Xerxes, to spare her life and the lives of her people from annihilation. (Esther 7:3)

Pharaoh must have smiled or winced at their foolishness. He looked at them for a couple seconds, gathered his thoughts and rose to his feet. He answered their demand with two simple statements. First, he denigrated the God of Israel. **"Who is this Lord, the God of Israel, that I should obey him?"**

As a man-god, Pharaoh believed that he had higher authority than the God of Israel. Before you condemn the pompous king, ask yourself if you have ever stood in Pharaoh's sandals. Have you ever defended a belief that you thought was true, only to learn later the belief you supported was dead wrong?

Among the religions of the world, which one has the greater God? Is Allah greater than Jehovah? Is Buddha greater than Jesus? Of course, the answer you may give to these questions about the superiority of gods will depend on your beliefs about God. Pharaoh worshiped the sun-god, Ra, and he was convinced his god was superior to the God of Israel. The Egyptians believed that Ra appointed Pharaoh himself to rule over Egypt and Pharaoh believed that Ra had divinely empowered him to be Egypt's king.

Pharaoh truthfully answered: **"I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go."** Pharaoh faced the bearers of God's demand and bluntly stated that he would not *obey* the demand. His response was about as direct and to the point as a human being can get no weasel words from Pharaoh.

In his defense, Pharaoh's response reflected his religious beliefs. From his point of view, Ra, was superior to Israel's God because the Hebrew nation was subservient to Egypt. If the God of the Hebrews was greater than Ra, then let Him deliver them from his hand! Now be honest. If you had been in Pharaoh's sandals that day, would you have granted a couple million slaves time off for a three-day religious service after two elderly slaves, speaking for the God of captives, *demand*ed it?

The Fear of the Lord

"Then they said

[to Pharaoh], **The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.**" (Exodus 5:3) Moses and Aaron were caught between their fear of the Lord and their fear of Pharaoh. They wanted to be sure the king knew they were not requesting a three-day leave of absence simply as a ploy to escape Pharaoh's dominion.

Rather, they were presenting a demand that the Lord their God had given to them. Moses and Aaron tried to reason with Pharaoh and told him the Hebrews needed to make atonement for

their sins with *their* God or *their* God might destroy them!

During 400 years of slavery in Egypt, the Hebrews had largely ignored God because remaining faithful to a God who permits His children to be held captive in a depressing situation that has no apparent end is very difficult. So, God told Israel through His servant, Moses, that His people must atone for their sins, as a precondition for being delivered from slavery. In other words, before a person (or nation) can receive the gift of freedom from slavery (sin), he or she must first make things right with God, then submit to God's demands.

To be honest, I do not think Pharaoh gave their response any thought. He wanted to get down to business. Standing before him were two men who had caused a big administrative problem. Pharaoh said, ". . . **Moses and Aaron, why are *you* taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!**" (Exodus 5:4, italics mine) The king had heard that Moses and Aaron were the instigators of a Sabbath rest rebellion and he ordered them to stop resting on the seventh day and get back to work.

This is quite a story. The story started when Moses notified the Hebrew elders that God required the Hebrews to rest from their labors on His holy day, the seventh day of the week, as another precondition for deliverance from slavery. Every slave was excited to hear that deliverance was at hand and of course, everyone welcomed a day of rest from their labors. So, the elders gave the word and the slaves began to keep God's seventh day Sabbath by resting from their labor.

Can you imagine the response of the task masters when they went to work as usual and found no slaves to do the work? So, Pharaoh's lieutenants immediately responded by requiring the slaves to produce the *same* quota of bricks in six days as they had been producing in seven. As far as the lieutenants were concerned, this requirement ensured the same level of production each week as before. The slaves did not complain, even though the observance of Sabbath meant extra hours of work each day doing the work of seven days in six days.

NOTE:

Scholars have debated whether the work stoppage caused by Moses and Aaron was the observance of God's seventh day Sabbath. Even though Exodus 5 does not specifically say the slaves rested on the seventh day of the week, the harmony of four supporting points adequately resolves this question.

1. From Creation to the time God gave the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai (a period of about 2,500 years), the only day set aside for rest is God's Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. (Genesis 2:2,3; Exodus 20:8-11)
2. Before God spoke the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, He tested Israel to see if they would obey Him by observing His seventh day. (Exodus 16:4.) This test proves two things. First, God's seventh day was holy *before* God gave the Ten Commandments. (Genesis 2:1-3) Second, God required Israel to observe His Sabbath *before* He gave the Ten Commandments.
3. God demands that His subjects observe His Sabbath day as written in the fourth

commandment because worshiping God cannot be determined by reason, customs, traditions or culture. True worship is joyful submission to God's *demands*. The Ten Commandments are not ten suggestions; the Ten Commandments are ten laws. Some scholars argue that Sabbath observance was an idea codified in the Ten Commandments to benefit the children of Israel. If this argument were true, why did God declare the seventh day of the week to be "holy" (or set apart) to Adam and Eve? (Genesis 2:1-3)

4. The word Pharaoh used suggests that Moses and Aaron led Israel to *Sabbath* from their labors. In Exodus 5:5, Pharaoh said to Aaron and Moses ". . . **You make them rest from their labor**" (KJV) and ". . . **You are stopping them from working. . . .**" (NIV) This verse indicates two things: First, Pharaoh appropriately charges Aaron and Moses for causing the Israelites to cease their labor. Think about this. Did Aaron and Moses cause Israel to rest from making bricks to agitate Pharaoh or did the slaves submit to the Sabbath rest because it was God's holy day? Second, the Hebrew word used by Pharaoh is *shabath* (Strong's #7673). He said, ". . . You make them *shabath*. . . ." This is the same word God used in Genesis 2:2 when He *rested* from His creative work on the seventh day. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" in the fourth commandment is a derivative of *shabath* the word Pharaoh used.

The combination of these four points indicates that the Hebrews were not honoring God's Sabbath day as they knew God had commanded, and He told Moses that they must worship Him by keeping His Sabbath day holy if they wanted to be delivered. (See Ezekiel 20:7,8.) So, the slaves obediently began to rest on the seventh day.

Allegiance to God's demand put Israel in direct opposition to Pharaoh's demand! This is exactly what God wanted and the end time parallel to this story will be no different. When it comes to worshiping God faith, obedience and deliverance are inseparable. It is impossible for a person knowingly to defy God's sovereignty and simultaneously, enjoy God's favor.

Moses informed the Hebrew elders that Israel must prove its faith in God to be delivered from slavery. Their first step in faith was to rest on God's Sabbath. Israel had to submit to God's higher authority to be delivered from slavery. God tested Israel's faith because His higher law conflicted with Pharaoh's lesser law. The distinct end time parallel should be obvious.

Pharaoh Becomes Mean

"That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, "Let us go and sacrifice to our God."" (Exodus 5:6-8)

After Aaron and Moses departed, Pharaoh reacted hatefully to their visit. God knew this was coming. Pharaoh became mean because he had no intention of losing control of the slaves. Notice how the carnal heart operates: Selfishness is all about getting and gaining, not losing.

Ego is all about being in control, not losing control.

The threat of loss produces anxiety and anger in the carnal heart. Aaron and Moses pressed Pharaoh's big red panic button, and his immediate response was to inflict a great deal of pain on his slaves. Pharaoh's response did not surprise God. God knew this was coming.

Please understand three things about living by faith. First, faith in God is much more than believing something about God is true. Agreeing with truth is different from living by faith. (Even the demons know certain truths about God and tremble. James 2:19) Faith in God means obedient submission to God's will *at any cost*.

Second, a life of faith is a life of testing. God's law is higher than man's law and He seriously tests faith when we are caught between doing right (as man decrees) or right (as God decrees) especially when the penalty for violating either law is severe. Daniel demonstrated this point when he was lowered into the lion's den.

He violated the king's law and he was to die in the lion's den. (Daniel 6) The story of Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego also demonstrates this point. These men were about to die (or so they thought) for honoring God's law and violating the king's law. (Daniel 3) Many people misunderstand what it means to have faith in God. God's law demands a level of righteousness that no human can achieve. The good news of the gospel is that God has eliminated our condemnation if we are willing to live by faith in Christ Jesus.

This does not mean that God has eliminated His law. Instead, it means that God will cover our imperfections with Christ's righteousness if we are willing to submit to His laws that are above all other laws. (Romans 7 and 8)

The third component of living by faith concerns ignorance. Ignorance is no excuse for disobedience in man's laws. You may drive 65 mph on a highway, honestly thinking that it is the speed limit. Not until an officer of the law stops and tells you that the speed limit is 55 mph and writes a speeding ticket, do you realize your error.

When it comes to God's law, ignorance does not lessen the consequences of sin, but ignorance does cancel the guilt. In this regard, God is much more generous than man because He knows our heart. But, remember that God will not, under any circumstances, pardon a person who lives in a defiant state of disobedience. (Hebrews 10:26) God confronted Pharaoh with the sovereignty of a higher King and his stubborn defiance eventually brought about condemnation and destruction.

These three points are inserted so you can see how God dealt with Pharaoh, who *at first, was ignorant* of God's sovereignty. He honestly believed that the God of the Hebrews was a lesser God than his sun-god, Ra. However, when the evidence of God's superiority became overwhelming, Pharaoh's ignorance did not give way to submission.

Instead, it turned into open defiance. Pharaoh's experience translates into a powerful end time parallel. Currently, billions of people are ignorant of God's demands on the human race. During

the Great Tribulation, God will present His demands in the clearest of terms to the human race. Some people will submit to God's demands, but a large majority of people will make the transition from ignorance to defiance.

Countermeasures

To counteract what he thought to be the religious nonsense spread by Aaron and Moses, Pharaoh imposed his authority on the slaves to painfully remind them of his sovereignty. Pharaoh demanded more work from the slaves than they could produce and his demands translated into immediate suffering.

Pharaoh's lieutenants controlled the slaves through a very clever scheme. Hebrew elders were appointed over family work units. Whenever a work unit failed to meet its quota, the elders were publicly beaten while their family work unit watched. This form of terrorism controlled the Hebrews very well. It was too much for sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters, to see their fathers beaten when production was inadequate, so they worked "like slaves" to meet their quotas.

Pharaoh imposed his demand on the Hebrews the very day that Moses and Aaron presented God's demand to the king. What a knee jerk reaction! Consider the developing dilemma: God demanded Sabbath rest as a precondition for deliverance, and Pharaoh demanded greater work and higher quotas from the slaves.

In addition to producing the same quota of bricks as before, they now had to gather the straw an impossible demand! This meant the elders of each family would be beaten regularly since the quotas could not be met. Suddenly, God's Sabbath became a nightmare. How could the slaves spend Sabbath with any peace of mind knowing that Sabbath rest would produce ruthless beatings?

Even if the slaves did not observe the seventh day Sabbath rest, they now had to gather straw to make their bricks. This chore was not required of them before Moses came to town. So, the work load reached a new high and their despair reached a new low. Their hopes of deliverance were crushed by intense suffering.

"Leave Us Alone Moses!"

A group of elders went to Pharaoh's court and with one voice they begged him to be reasonable and lighten the work load because it was humanly impossible for them to fulfill the demand. The Bible says, **"The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day. When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, May the Lord look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."** (Exodus 5:19-21) Aaron and Moses must have felt terrible.

A simple demand presented to Pharaoh had turned life for the Hebrews upside down. Of course, God foreknew these events would occur, but He wanted to demonstrate several key parallels about Pharaoh's carnal heart *for future generations*. People can joyfully declare allegiance to God when there is no contest between the laws of men and the laws of God. Keeping God's Sabbath rest is a joy when there is no threat of persecution. However, sooner or later, God's sovereignty collides with governments of this world.

The Bible says there was war in Heaven over the issue of God's sovereignty. (See Isaiah 14 and Revelation 12.) The struggle for supremacy is the essence of the battle whether the battlefield is the human heart, the court of Pharaoh, or in Heaven. The battle to control human loyalty has never been more intense than it is right now, and most people are unaware that it is even going on!

The devil knows that his days are short and he is working overtime to keep the minds of people dull with the cares of life. The devil has lured young people into sexual immorality and he has pacified "pew warmers" with entertainers who have no idea of God's coming wrath. The day when God will suddenly step into the affairs of the human race and reveal His sovereignty is almost here. On a single day, life on Earth will change! (Revelation 8:2-5)

God is about to send a series of devastating judgments on the Earth (the seven trumpets of Revelation) and during these judgments, through His 144,000 servants, He will announce His will to Earth's inhabitants. Revelation predicts that most men and women will respond like Pharaoh: **"I do not know the Lord and I will not obey. . . ."**

When Moses saw the elders being beaten because they could not meet their quota of bricks, **"Moses returned to the Lord and said, O Lord, why have *you* brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."** (Exodus 5:22,23, italics mine) Moses had presented God's demands before Pharaoh just as God required.

Imagine how Moses must have felt when he saw the painful beatings. No wonder Moses cried unto the Lord, "*You* have not helped *your* people! *You* are killing them with the rod of Pharaoh!" If only Moses had understood that this was exactly the situation the Lord wanted. **"Then the Lord said to Moses, Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."** (Exodus 6:1)

God's purposes and actions are always manifold. In a spiritual sense, this means that God "kills several birds with one stone." His ways are always higher and grander than our earthly solutions. **"As the heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."** (Isaiah 55:9) God is the Master Designer and Moses' story has many lessons and parallels for you and me.

Summary Parallels

1 - The sovereignty of God is a truth and man's awareness of this fact is ever evaporating. Lessons learned yesterday are forgotten tomorrow. Unless we are careful, we can minimize God's power and like young Moses and Abraham, take matters into our own hands and dishonor Him. The problem with fallen humanity is that we are always trying to assume the prerogatives of God.

To compensate for this sinister process, from time to time, God creates real-life dramas with real-life players to remind every person of His sovereignty. Remember how King Nebuchadnezzar vainly thought he was Sovereign over Earth? After living like an animal for seven years, he finally conceded that God was Sovereign.

Pharaoh, on the other hand, refused to concede that God was Sovereign, even after God horribly decimated Egypt with ten plagues! Pharaoh went to his death (in the middle of the Red Sea) because of his defiant stubbornness. Pharaoh's experience proves that rebellion can be so complete within a person's heart that he or she will never submit to God. The truth remains, however, that no sooner is the knowledge of God's authority established on Earth than it begins to evaporate again.

When God created the seventh day, He had His reasons for doing so. God imposed His Sabbath rest test on the Hebrews to show His Sovereign power to the Hebrews and the Egyptians. It is a mystery that so many people do not want to rest on God's Sabbath. People offer a dozen reasons why we should not observe God's Sabbath, but what are excuses to God?

When God demanded that His Sabbath be observed as a precondition for deliverance, the Hebrews initially complied. When Pharaoh learned that the Israelites threatened his sovereignty, he implemented pain and torture. The slaves were trapped between two great powers and the penalty for defying either was great!

During the Great Tribulation, God will present His Sabbath rest to the people of Earth with the force of law. God's servants, the 144,000, will explain how God's seventh day Sabbath is not a suggestion, nor an option it is the fourth commandment of God's law. Like Pharaoh, the world does not currently submit to God's law or honor God's day of rest. During the Great Tribulation, a great conflict will erupt over the issue of worship. Bible prophecies reveal how this conflict will occur: God will initiate the Great Tribulation with a series of destructive judgments.

Because these coming judgments will be overwhelming and catastrophic (killing more than 1.5 billion people in a short time), the survivors on Earth will suddenly wake up to the reality that there is a living God and He is angry with man's behavior. To appease God so that His judgments will cease, the religious and political leaders of the world will unite and impose sinless laws upon mankind. Eventually, these laws will include laws *mandating* that God be worshiped, but these laws will directly oppose God's law.

This contest that God has ordained will cause the people of Earth (like the Hebrews of old) to be caught between two powerful forces. If people obey the laws of men, they will receive the seven bowls of God's wrath. (Revelation 16) If people obey God's law and honor His seventh day

Sabbath, the governments of the world will persecute, imprison or execute them for rebellion. This is the coming contest, and the story of Moses offers an end time parallel for God's people so that our faith in God is strengthened for this eventuality.

2 - Remember that God demanded the Hebrews to observe His Sabbath as a precondition for deliverance. God sent this demand through Moses because He wanted to (a) demonstrate man's rebellion by confronting Pharaoh, the most powerful man on Earth at the time, (b) teach the Hebrews their first lesson in faith, e.g., the importance of trusting in God's leading at any cost or suffering, and (c) use Israel and their deliverance as an object lesson for generations to come. Unfortunately, Pharaoh's persecution destroyed the faith of most Hebrews.

They lost confidence in Moses and in God. So, God sent them a message of hope: **"Therefore [Moses], say to the Israelites: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. *Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord. Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.*"** (Exodus 6:6-9, italics mine) Did you notice the last sentence?

The Hebrews murmured against Almighty God, gave Moses a good cussing and refused to go along with God's plans. If the Hebrews could have known all that we know now, they would have rejoiced at God's words! However, no murmuring, faithlessness, discouragement, and bitterness can shut out God's promises and purposes.

There is an end time parallel here. God placed the Hebrews in a tough situation to test their faith and He showed them they had no faith. Unfortunately, they did not catch the vision and they gave up! Most of the Hebrews went back to work on Sabbath because they lacked faith in God.

Do not forget, these same people died in the wilderness because they never overcame their lack of faith. The end time parallel here is so powerful. Believers in Christ are now the Hebrews. We are the children of God! During the Great Tribulation, God will once again set His Sabbath rest up in direct opposition to man's laws.

Everyone who wants to be delivered from the bondage of sin must submit to God as a precondition to being set free! This will cause our faith to be severely tested. Salvation comes through faith and God will test our faith to see where each of us will stand! When people deliberately and intentionally choose to suffer because of their faith in God, He makes their faith pure, like gold. This refining process produces the type of people who will inherit the Earth made new!

God says, **"This third [the remnant] I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, They are**

my people, and they will say, The Lord is our God." (Zechariah 13:9, insertion mine)

3. - This study of Moses and the Exodus gives us one final unexpected parallel. For thousands of years, slaves have been marked with tattoos or hot-iron brands. (For a picture of a hot iron used for branding slaves during the era of African slave trading, see *National Geographic*, September 1992, page 72)

A person cannot remove or lose a brand or tattoo. It is not transferable. Even as late as World War II, Hitler tattooed millions of prisoners in his concentration camps. The reason for marking slaves is simple. The owner/slave relationship is permanent. Children born of slaves are also slaves. Normally, a slave is never freed because ownership never ends. This is the ugly power of slavery (sin). I believe that Pharaoh's adult slaves were marked with tattoos or brands. This mark prevented any possibility of escape from Egypt, for no one would dare purchase property belonging to the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Did God forbid the Hebrews from wearing tattoos because they were no longer slaves? He said, **"Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord."** (Leviticus 19:28) Perhaps the reason behind this command is that God's people are never slaves, because they are always free to exercise the power of choice. God did not want His people to deface their bodies with markings associated with slavery.

The Lord said, ". . . I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians." (Exodus 6:6,7)

When Pharaoh's firstborn was killed during Passover night, he finally came to the point of temporary submission. He allowed Moses and the children of Israel to leave Egypt at sunrise. To commemorate this marvelous deliverance, God instituted an annual memorial of this event. He told the Israelites, **"This observance [e.g., the observance of Passover] will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand."** (Exodus 13:9, insertion mine)

Another interesting parallel is that observing Passover (the day their freedom began) *was like a sign* on the hand or forehead. This statement may reflect the fact that Pharaoh's slaves wore a sign (a tattoo or branding) on their hand or their foreheads indicating their status.

I believe a Hebrew foreman probably wore the mark on his forehead, while the rank and file slave wore their status on their hands. The parallel is that the mark of the beast will be a tattoo or a branding that will be worn on the right hand or on the forehead! **"He [the Antichrist, the lamb-like beast] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the [Antichrist, the lamb-like] beast or the number of his name."** (Revelation 13:16,17, insertions mine)

When the devil radiantly appears on Earth (fifth trumpet), he will masquerade as God. He will establish a new world order and install himself as king of kings and lord of lords. Only those people who unite with his government can conduct commerce, survival buying and selling. (Revelation 13:17)

Anyone who refuses to unite with the devil's one-world government will be killed. The permit to conduct business will be a physical mark on the hand or forehead. The mark will be a tattoo or hot-iron brand. This mark will not be transferable, so it cannot be stolen or lost.

This "proof of membership" in the new world order requires no electricity or computers. This form of identification will work in any village on this planet. Satan's foremen will wear the *name* that the Antichrist will assume on their foreheads, and rank and file members will wear the evil number, 666, on their right hand. To survive, people will submit to the devil's demands rather than submit to the authority of God!

When Jesus comes in clouds of glory, two groups of people will be on Earth: People who chose to receive the mark of the beast and people who are free of Satan's bondage. When Israel finally entered the promised land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the new generation did not bear the marks of slavery on their bodies. They were truly free!

On the other hand, the same adults whom God miraculously delivered from Egypt died in the wilderness. Even though they were freed of Pharaoh's slavery by God's mighty power, they never did escape the bondage of their carnal rebellion against God. This is a profound lesson from Moses story: Our escape from the bondage of sin is only possible through a patient faith that produces total submission to God's demands.