

Seeing Christ in Moses

December 29, 2019

I. Introduction

A. In **1 John 2:1-2**, we read these words, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** (*one who intercedes or mediates*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and **He Himself** is the **propitiation** (*appeasement, atoning sacrifice*) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

1. An **advocate** is a person who intercedes or mediates in support or defense of someone who lacks the standing or influence or power to plead his own case before a judge or tribunal. And when we sin, we are the ones who lack standing before God, and Jesus is the one who acts as our advocate by interceding with God on our behalf.

2. The scripture also uses the word “**mediator**” to express what Jesus does on our behalf when we sin. We read this in **1 Timothy 2:5-6**, “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave Himself as a ransom for all...” A mediator is one who stands between two parties when they are in conflict and helps them settle their dispute and reconcile their relationship.

B. There was a time in the life of Israel when Moses was their advocate – standing between God and them – and in so doing, he became an example of the way Jesus intercedes with God on our behalf. This story is found in **Exodus 19-34**, and today I am going to use this story to help us see what Jesus is doing – day after day – in taking His place as our advocate between God and us when we sin.

C. Pray

II. The Story

A. The story begins in **Exodus 19:20** with Moses being called by God to ascend Mount Sinai and meet with Him for the purpose of receiving the Ten Commandments and the laws by which God’s people were to live. Moses did ascend Mount Sinai, but he was gone for forty days and nights. Somewhere near the end of the almost six weeks Moses was on the mountain talking with God, the Israelites began thinking that Moses was dead – which meant that neither Moses nor his god would be coming back to lead and protect them. And so in **Exodus 32:1** we read that the

Israelites turned to Aaron and asked him to make them a god who would lead them to the Promised Land.

- B. And as you know, Aaron did make a golden calf and Israel not only called this image their god, but they spoke of this image as the god who had brought them out of Egypt. They then held a feast to pay homage to their new god. On the day when Israel began their feasting, God said to Moses, “Go down at once, for **your people**, whom **you brought** up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. [8] They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt’” (**Exodus 32:7-8**).
- C. However, God did not stop with calling the Israelites, Moses’ people instead of His own people, He continued on – and what He said next motivated Moses to become Israel’s advocate. The Lord said, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. [10] Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and **that I may destroy them**; and I will make of you a great nation” (**Exodus 32:9-10**).
1. This was not the first time Israel offended God. They had angrily accused God and Moses of failing them, and on one occasion they wanted to kill Moses. But this time they went even further, for this time they committed adultery – by rejecting God as their god and replacing Him with an idol – an idol they called “their god” and claimed it was the god who brought them out of Egypt. So in response to this insane act of adultery on Israel’s part, God said He would destroy them.
 2. It is at this point that Moses steps between God and Israel as Israel’s advocate and begins to intercede on their behalf. And it is at this point that Moses’ work of interceding and mediating provides a picture of Jesus’ work on our behalf before God.
- D. **First Act of Mediation** – Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? [12] Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. [13] Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars

of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever” (**Exodus 32:11-13**)

1. Picture this moment. Israel has sorely offended God by not only committing spiritual adultery, they divorced themselves from God and took up with an idol. But rather than joining God in condemning Israel for being so sinful and foolish, Moses jumps between God’s wrath and Israel guilt and begins to mediate.
2. And why does Israel need an advocate? Because in rejecting God and taking up with an idol, Israel lost their standing or influence or power to plead their own case before God. In other words, they had no voice or no way to counter their guilt before God.
3. So Moses stepped in, and his interceding worked, for we read in **Exodus 32:1**, “So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.”

E. After securing this change of mind from God, Moses proceeded down the mountain and entered the camp. As you may recall, it was upon seeing the idol and accompanying festivities that Moses threw down the stone tablet on which God had written the ten commandments – and it shattered on the ground. Moses then proceeded to deal with the people concerning their terrible sin. This part of the story is contained in **Exodus 32:19-29**. I will leave this part for you to read later.

F. On the next day, Moses spoke to the people about their sin, and it was during this talk that he said, “You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can **make atonement** for your sin” (**Exodus 32:30**). **Here again is a picture of Jesus, for he too ascended a hill to make atonement for our sin.** And this brings us to Moses’ second act of mediation.

G. **Second Act of Mediation – Exodus 32:31-32** says . . . Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, “Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. [32] But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!”

1. What a powerful argument. Moses begins by pleading with God to forgive Israel, but should God refuse to forgive them, Moses asks God to pour out His wrath on him in place of the people. In other words, Moses was willing to take the peoples’ place and bear their punishment in order to save them from God’s wrath. **Is this not what Jesus did for us?**

2. God's response to Moses' request is recorded in **Exodus 32:33-34** . . . "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. [34] But go now, **lead the people** where I told you. Behold, **My angel** shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin."
3. In God's response there are three things that we ought to consider.
 - a. **First**, God made the legal position of sinners very clear – they will be punished. Therefore, the only way they can be forgiven is to have someone bear their punishment for them.
 - b. **Second**, God does forgive, as we see in His forgiving Israel.
 - c. **Third**, in spite of being forgiven, sinners will still bear some immediate consequences for their sin, as seen in God's withdrawal of His personal presence from Israel and replacing Himself with an angel.
4. Interestingly, the threat of God withdrawing His personal presence produced a sadness amongst the Israelites that overshadowed the joy of their forgiveness. We read in **Exodus 33:4-5** that the Israelites went into mourning at learning that God was going to withdraw His presence from their midst. However, Moses "the advocate" had no intention of accepting this decision as God's final decision concerning His relationship to Israel. Moses wanted God's forgiveness for the people **and** God's personal presence with the people.

H. **Third Act of Mediation** – This third act of mediation brings us to a three part negotiation between Moses and God. This three part process takes place in **Exodus 33:12-13** . . . Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I (*God*) have known you (*Moses*) by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' [13] Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people."

1. In **Part One** of the three part negotiation, Moses begins by telling God he doesn't know the angel like he knows God. You see, the angel was a stranger to Moses, whereas Moses had an intimate, face-to-face relationship with God. So what Moses is asking for is that God, himself, would stay with Israel rather than replace Himself with an angel.
2. In **Part Two** of the three part negotiation, Moses wants more than God's presence with Israel. Moses wants to ensure he continues to

have God's personal presence for himself. In other words, he did not want to lose his face-to-face relationship with God. So in this second part of the negotiation, Moses argues that God must maintain His relationship with Moses so that Moses will be able to continue speaking the words of God and doing the works of God in the ways that please God. **Do you recall how often Jesus stated that He pleased God by speaking and doing only what God told Him to speak and do?**

3. In **Part Three** of this negotiation, Moses reminds God that the Israelites were God's people – in spite of their sin.
 - a. Now the essence of Moses' argument goes like this: "Don't withdraw your personal presence from Israel! Don't leave them with anyone but Yourself even though they have sinned against You!"
 - b. And the inference of Moses' argument is: "A good father does not leave his children to be raised by someone else just because they have sorely disappointed him."
4. God responded to Moses by saying, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest (bring you into the Land)" (**Exodus 33:14**).

I. **Fourth Act of Mediation** – God's promise to personally go with Moses instead of sending an angel was closer to the response Moses wanted, but it wasn't as complete as he wanted.

1. True, Moses had secured God's continued personal presence for himself, but not for Israel. He knew God would be present with Israel in some form or another, but he wanted God's presence to be obvious, and he wanted God to personally interact with the Israelites. So Moses continued to intercede on behalf of the Israelites. In **Exodus 33:15-16**, Moses said to God . . . "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. [16] For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, **I and Your people**? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, **I and Your people**, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?"
2. In essence, Moses told God that it was His personal and obvious presence which distinguished all of them (*Moses and the people*) from all the other religions and peoples of the world.
3. You see, there are many religions in the world, and many sincere people engaging in religious practices. But one of the things God's people have which distinguishes them from every other religion and

religious person is the personal and obvious presence of God in their lives. You see, God's personal presence is one of the manifestations that we belong to Him!!

4. God responded to this fourth request by saying, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name" (**Exodus 33:17**).
 - a. **Notice:** it is because of Moses that God was willing to restore His personal and obvious presence to the Israelites.
 - b. Are you getting this? It is the advocate's good standing with God that secured from God this great good for those who had sinned against God.
 - c. **In a similar way, when we sin and God threatens to withdraw his personal presence from us, it is Jesus "our advocate" who secures God's continued personal presence for us. And he is able to do this because of the favor He has with God.**

J. **Fifth Act of Mediation** – In spite of God's willingness to restore His personal presence to Israel, Moses was not through. He knew that he had to see and know God **AS GOD IS** if he was to fuel the people's desire to be reconciled to God. Why? Because the people feared God with a fear that motivated them to keep their distance from God. Therefore they needed help in being motivated to draw near to God. And so it is at this point that Moses began his fifth negotiation with God, by saying, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" (**Exodus 33:18**)

1. God's response to Moses was not showy, but it was profound and what Moses needed. Therefore, God said to Moses, "I Myself will **make all My goodness pass before you**, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you;. . . [20] But you cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (**Exodus 33:19-20**)
 - a. Did you catch the switch in words? Moses asked to see God's **glory**. God said He would show Moses His **goodness**.
 - b. Could it be that to see God's **goodness** is to see God's **glory**? I think so. It seems to me that God is telling Moses that he, Moses, needs to see and comprehend God's goodness if he is going to fuel the people's desire to repent and be reconciled to God. Why? Because as we read in **Romans 2:4**, it is God's **goodness**, or God's kindness that leads us to repentance.
2. Well, God did show Himself to Moses and we read about it in **Exodus 34**. Listen to this description of God passing in front of Moses and see

if this isn't the same God that Jesus makes real to us each and every day!!

- a. **Exodus 34:6-10** . . . Then the Lord passed by in front of [Moses] and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; [7] who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."
- b. What did Moses see? He saw that God is a beautiful combination of love and justice, mercy and judgement, grace and wrath. He saw that God is as eager to forgive the sinner as He is to pour out His wrath on sin. Is this not the same God Jesus has shown us?

K. **Sixth Act of Mediation** – Now you may be thinking that by now, we should be at the end of this story. Not so. Moses, being the persistent advocate he was, made one more request on behalf of the people. Listen carefully, for at first it may seem as if Moses is simply repeating himself – but he isn't. Moses said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession" (**Exodus 34:9**).

1. I want us to consider just two points in this request.
 - a. **First**, Moses' request is based on God being pleased with Moses. If this request were based on God being pleased with the people, it would never get the hoped for outcome.
 - b. **Second**, Moses is asking God to **always** be with them, to **continually** forgive them, and to **always** count them as His people – in spite of the fact that the people are going to sin again and again and again.
2. Think of Jesus as I read this next statement. Moses "the advocate" is asking the Holy God to show great grace to the obstinate, sinful people of Israel even though they will sin again and again.
3. Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant," that is, a binding agreement (**Exodus 34:10a**).

L. **This is almost unbelievable.** Israel sins by rejecting Jehovah as their God and replacing Him with a golden calf. God responds by saying He is going to destroy them. Moses intercedes with God on Israel's behalf, and we wind up here – with God saying He will make a covenant with Israel that

will guarantee He will be loving and gracious toward them in spite of future failures on their part.

M. Is this not the very same thing Jesus secured from God for us? Listen to these words of Jesus as he passed the cup to his disciples on the night before his crucifixion, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (**Luke 22:20**). The writer of Hebrews sums this all up in **Hebrews 7:22** . . . “Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.”