

Exodus Chapter 3

Verses 1-6

“The angel of the LORD” who appeared to Moses is identified as “the God of thy father, the God of Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob.”

This is apparently the continuation of the manifestations of “the angel of the LORD” begun in Genesis 16:7.

This one is more than just an angelic messenger from God.

Frequently He received the respect, worship and honor reserved only for God; yet He was consistently distinguished from God (note the references in Genesis 16:7-11; 21:17; 22:11-18; 24:7, 40; 31:11; 32:24-30; 48:15-16).

He carried an identity with God; yet He was also sent from Him!

The patriarchs may not have regarded Him as equivalent to a Christophany, but it is sure that He was not the invisible God.

And He acted and talked as the LORD.

Exodus 3:1 "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, [even] to Horeb."

“Moses kept the flock of Jethro”:

Moses worked as a shepherd while living with his father-in-law, a life and occupation quite different from the privilege and prestige associated with his life in Pharaoh’s court.

“Horeb”:

An alternative name for Mt. Sinai (19:11; Deut. 4:10).

Traditionally, this mountain has been identified with Jebel Musa, “the mountain of Moses.”

“Horeb” is the Hebrew for the non-Semitic place/name, Sinai, located in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula.

“The mountain of God”:

This is known as such because of what took place there later in Israel’s history.

This name for the mountain suggests that the book of Exodus was written by Moses after the events at Sinai.

Others suggest that it was already known as a sacred mountain prior to the call of Moses; but it seems best to relate the name to what God did for Israel there.

It appears that Moses, after forty years, was still working for his father-in-law.

Jethro and Reuel, as we said in the last lesson, was probably the same person.

Jethro means "his excellence", which is a title and Reuel was his name.

Here we see Moses leading this flock away from so many of the neighbor's flock, to a place where probably, very few came.

The Mount of God, called Horeb here, was probably Sinai.

At least they were in the same range.

This flock mentioned here, are probably sheep.

We see Moses for the last forty years living a very peaceful life, settling down and having a family and actually changing from a youthful forty to an old man of eighty years.

At any rate, he has had plenty of time to think about his life.

Exodus 3:2 "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush [was] not consumed."

“The angel of the LORD”:

Literally “messenger of Yahweh” who, in context, turns out to be the LORD Himself talking to Moses (Acts 7:30).

This appearance of the “Angel of the LORD” is the first instance of direct revelation to Moses.

After 80 years, Moses was now ready to fulfill the LORD’s calling.

No other leader in biblical times had such a lengthy training period.

Times of preparation are never wasted; God knows that, properly prepared, His servants can do more in 40 years that they could do in 120 unprepared.

This appearance here, in my opinion, was actually the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that the baptism that Jesus brings is the baptism of fire, and also Jesus is the Lord.

This was not a regular fire but the fire of the Spirit, because a regular fire would have burned this bush up.

This had to be the fire of the Spirit.

Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire:"

This fire I believe is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Exodus 3:3 "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

Moses' attention was drawn to a most unusual sight, that of a burning bush which was not being consumed by the fire within.

A supernatural event is the only viable explanation.

Natural explanations of certain types of flowers with gaseous pods or oil glands fail, in that, after 40 years of work in the desert, Moses would surely have ignored something normal.

For this shepherd, it would not have been unusual to see a bush catch on fire and burn up.

But to see one on fire that did not burn up had caught Moses' attention and he went to investigate this phenomenon.

Exodus 3:4 "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here [am] I."

This was so different that it aroused his curiosity and demanded further examination.

God was in the bush speaking, clearly a miraculous event.

Mount "Horeb" (Sinai) is not only where Moses received his divine commission at the burning bush, but it is also the place where Yahweh would give Israel His gracious gift of the Law.

Here we see the call of Moses to a very great task.

God calls to each of us but some of us do not answer, "Here am I".

Notice here, that the Spirit of God can appear in any form.

God is a Spirit, We see in John 4:24 in Jesus' own words, because it is printed red in the Bible.

John 4:24 "God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth."

You see, God does not have to conform to what we believe.

We believe when He does it His way.

We see here, the Spirit of God speaking to Moses from the bush.

Verses 5-10

See Acts 7:33-34.

Exodus 3:5 "And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest [is] holy ground."

For these divine moments, the area near the bush was the LORD's house because of the LORD's presence ("holy ground").

The resulting command to "take your shoes off thy feet" reflects this.

In Afro-Asian culture, people do not wear shoes inside a home.

This to me is something that we all forget from time to time.

In the presence of God is holy ground.

I feel that our place of worship is a holy place and should be approached with great respect.

The actual room in the church where the preaching takes place I believe, should be treated with great respect.

There should be no eating or drinking, or even really loud talking.

This one place I believe, should be set aside as a special place to come and talk with God.

Our society has gotten far too casual with God.

God deserves our respect and worship.

Exodus 3:6 "Moreover he said, I [am] the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

“I am the God of thy father”:

God’s opening words, although important for Moses to hear, point the reader back to 2:24, showing that the God of Israel has remembered His people and has begun to take action (Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32).

“Moses hid his face”:

A fitting reaction of reverent fear in the presence of the Divine was modeled by Moses.

Here again, we see that this was probably the one we know as Jesus because we see that He is the God of the faithful.

Abraham was the father of the faithful, as we see in Galatians.

Galatians 3:6-7 "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

Probably Moses had been taught by his Hebrew mother to reverence God.

Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Verses 7-22

The significance of the name of God given in verse 14, “I AM THAT I AM,” constitutes the idea that the “I AM” (in Exodus 3), reveals God as the Being who is absolutely self-existent, and who, in Himself, possesses essential life and permanent existence.

To the Hebrew, *to be* ” doesn’t just mean to exist, but to be active, and also to express oneself in active being.

God is the One who acts.

The imperfect tense of the verb becomes clear.

God’s manifestation to Israel is yet future at the time of the burning bush incident.

The “I AM” or “I will be” is God’s promise that He will redeem the children of Israel.

The people wanted to be reassured that this God would meet them in their time of need, proving His character and promises.

The phrase “no, not by a mighty hand” may best be understood as “not by a strong hand [of man] but by a divine agency” as expressed (in 6:1):

“Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for ... with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.”

Several other translations have “unless a mighty hand compels him” and “except under compulsion.”

Exodus 3:7 "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which [are] in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;"

“I have surely seen ... have heard their cry”:

An emphasis on God’s having been aware of the desperate situation of Israel.

The LORD was telling Moses that He was aware of the terrible cruelty these taskmasters had shown the Israelites.

God is not unaware of our problems.

He not only knows, but cares.

If we cry out to Him for help, He is always there to answer.

In the case of these Israelites, they were a long time asking but now God had heard them and was about to free them.

Exodus 3:8 "And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites."

The result of God’s hearing them (in verse 7).

Here He promised to deliver them from Egyptian oppression.

Here, and in the next two verses, the repetitive manner in describing what God saw and would do, served to underscore all the more, His personal involvement in the history of His people whom He had sent into Egypt.

“I am come down to deliver them”:

These were words for Israel, but they also point to the future incarnation of Jesus (John 1:14).

“Unto a good land...large, unto a land ... unto the place”:

Three descriptions of the land to which Israel was going to be taken emphatically underscored the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant.

“Flowing with milk and honey”:

This was a formal and graphic way of describing a fertile and of bounteous provision.

“The Canaanites and the Hittites”:

A specific identification of the territory to which Israel was going; her Promised Land was currently inhabited by other peoples.

Notice here, that it was God who would deliver them.

Moses was the instrument God used, but it was God who delivered.

This desert land of Egypt had become a real heartache.

By this time, they had cultivated the land around Goshen to the extent that the land was not producing like it first did.

God was promising these descendants of Abraham a better life.

This Promised Land that God was promising is about 11,000 square miles, and would be large enough to handle this approximately three million people.

However, it is a very small area compared to other countries.

It is approximately the size of one of the smaller states here in the U.S.

This land, when God was speaking to Moses, was already occupied by ungodly people.

This was however, the land that God promised Abraham a few hundred years before.

God had given these people who were in the land, a space to repent of their evil ways; and they had not and now the Israelites were to claim their inheritance.

Exodus 3:9 "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them."

God notices the afflictions of Israel.

Their sorrows; even the secret sorrows of God's people are known to him.

Their cry; God hears the cries of his afflicted people.

The oppression they endured; the highest and greatest of their oppressors are not above him.

God promises speedy deliverance by methods out of the common ways of providence.

Those whom God, by his grace, delivers out of a spiritual Egypt, he will then bring them to a heavenly Canaan.

Exodus 3:10 "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

I will send thee”:

The divine summons made Moses both leader/deliverer of Israel and also the ambassador of God before Pharaoh.

God is always in sympathy with the oppressed.

He was even more in sympathy with the Israelites, for they were His covenant people.

God is always against those who are cruel to others, and that certainly was the case here.

These Egyptian taskmasters had been very cruel.

Here we see God telling Moses exactly what his (Moses'), call was.

He was to go to Pharaoh and represent all the Israelites.

Moses was commanded of God to bring them out of Egypt.

Sometimes the things that God calls us to do seems very near impossible to carry out; but we must remember that when God calls us to do a task, He will see to it that it is possible for us to do it.

Exodus 3:11 "And Moses said unto God, Who [am] I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses typified human response when God calls someone to what seems beyond them (“Who am I), yet the success of any divine mission is never dependent on human abilities.

The first response is an objection from Moses to the divine summons, an expression of inadequacy for such a serious mission.

It sounded reasonable, for after 40 years of absence from Egypt, what could he, a mere shepherd in Midian, do upon return?

Here, we see Moses, humble, believing that he was not capable of doing this job that God had called him to do.

Some have called Moses the humblest man who ever lived, except for Jesus.

One of the reasons God calls anyone to service for Him, is because He realizes that within themselves they cannot do the job.

God doesn't call someone to work for Him, because he can already do whatever He has called him for.

God wants to work through us. The only thing we need to do is be willing to be used of God.

God just wants a willing vessel.

He will furnish the ability and power (from Him), to accomplish the task.

All He wants us to say is "Here am I, send me".

A willing, humble heart is what God is looking for.

If we are proud of ourselves and self-sufficient, He can't use us.

The nearer we are to God, the more we feel capable of doing the things He has called us to.

In our weakness, God is strong.

Our sufficiency is of God, and not ourselves.

I cannot say it enough.

We are not capable within ourselves to do anything for God.

We must allow the Holy Spirit of God to work in us and through us.

The power is God's power, not our own.

Exodus Chapter 3 Questions

1. Whose flock did Moses keep?
2. Who was Jethro?
3. Where did Moses take the flock?

4. How many years had Moses worked in Midian?
5. What was another name for Jethro?
6. Why had Moses gone here?
7. What Mount was the same as Horeb?
8. How old was Moses in chapter 3?
9. Who appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in the bush?
10. What was unusual about this burning bush?
11. Who does the author believe the angel appearance was?
12. What was different about Jesus' baptism from John the Baptist's baptism?
13. Why did Moses go to see the bush?
14. When God called Moses, what did Moses answer?
15. What does John 4:24 tell us about God?
16. Why was Moses told to remove his shoes?
17. What two things does God deserve from us?
18. Whose God did this voice say He was?
19. Why did Moses hide his face?
20. What does Galatians 3:6-7 tell us about Abraham?
21. Why had God come to Moses at this time?
22. When we cry out to God for help, what can we expect?
23. Where was God going to send the Israelites?
24. Who was in Canaan at this time?
25. Who would deliver them?
26. What was Moses in all this?
27. What part of Egypt had these Israelites lived in?
28. The Promised Land was about how many square miles?

29. Who had God promised this Canaan to, many years before?
30. Whose cry had come up to God?
31. Who was God sending Moses to?
32. What was Moses to do with the Israelites?
33. Who is God always in sympathy with?
34. When we feel the task God has called us to do seems very near to impossible, what must we remember?
35. What humble remark did Moses make to God?
36. What is one reason God calls certain people to work for Him?
37. What power do we have within ourselves?
38. What power must we draw upon to successfully work for God?
39. What is the only thing we furnish?
40. When God calls us, what should we answer?