



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for September 5, 2010
Released on Wednesday, September 1, 2010**

“God’s Revelation to Moses”

Lesson Text: Exodus 3:1–6, 13–15

Background Scripture: Exodus 3

Exodus 3:1–6, 13–15

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to show how God revealed Himself to Moses.

Principle: to show that God is willing to reveal Himself to all who wish to know Him.

Application: to open our hearts and minds to our God and be ready to see what He shows us of Himself.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The lessons to be studied through the month of September will emphasize the theme *God Reveals*. That God reveals himself to humanity is one of the most pivotal doctrines of the entire Bible. It has often been pointed out that the Bible is not a record of humanity's attempts to find God. It is, rather, God's revelation of himself to humanity. It is a revelation of His desire to enter into a relationship with those created in His image, even though people are often rebellious and more concerned with pursuing their own agendas than God's. As today's lesson will show, Moses was a prime example of such an attitude.

From the start of the account of his life, it appears that Moses was destined for greatness in being spared from Pharaoh's murderous edict and raised by Pharaoh's own daughter. Acts 7:22 tells us, "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."

At the age of 40, Moses came upon an Israelite being mistreated by an Egyptian. He killed the Egyptian, thinking by doing so that "his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not" (Acts 7:25). The next day, when Moses saw two Israelites fighting and tried to be a peacemaker, he was chastised by one of the Israelites who angrily asked him, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?" (vs. 27,28).

Moses then fled to Midian, where he stayed for 40 years (Acts 7:30). This is where we find him at the beginning of our lesson text for today. More important than Moses' location geographically, however, was where he was spiritually. Perhaps he had resigned himself to the fact that he had mistaken his calling. Exodus 2:21,22 tells us that he married while in Midian and named his firstborn son Gershom (meaning "an alien there") declaring, "I have been a stranger in a strange land."

But Moses had not mistaken his calling—only the timing of it. That had to be God's and God's alone.

UNUSUAL SITUATION (Exodus 3:1-6)

1. Where was Moses at this time of his life, and what was he doing?

At this point Moses has taken on the responsibility of tending *the flock of Jethro his father-in-law*. Not long after Moses had first arrived in Midian, he had come to the aid of Jethro's seven daughters. They were drawing water from a well for their flocks but were being harassed by some other shepherds (Exodus 2:16,17). Moses married Zipporah, one of Jethro's daughters, and he began to learn the shepherd's task. (Moses probably figured there were few other options left for him.)

We cannot help wondering how often Moses thought back to Egypt during his forty years of being the shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks. He still had family there, both a brother and a sister. Is it not likely that he often wondered how they were doing? How very different his life was now from his days as the respected son of royalty!

God has ways of suddenly changing the direction of a person's life, and Moses was just about to experience that. It is exciting to realize that no matter where we are in life, God is aware of us and can redirect us anytime He so chooses.

2. What event caught Moses' attention, and what was unusual about what he saw (Exodus 3:1-3)?

God had not forgotten Moses. It was now forty years later (Acts 7:29,30), and he was on the far side of the desert with Jethro's flock. He came to a mountain named Horeb (also called Mount Sinai), which is referred to in Exodus 3:1 as "the mountain of God."

Doubtless, Moses had seen fires where the fuel had been consumed. There is also a bit of mystery surrounding the identity of *the angel of the Lord* (v. 2). In this passage, there seems to be little distinction between the angel and the Lord himself as verse 4 indicates, and that close relationship must be respected. Some propose that the angel of the Lord is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. Nevertheless, Moses demonstrated the natural human reaction when he turned aside to see the burning bush. But it was not the fire itself or the fire's destructive nature that got his attention. Rather, it was the fact that the fire was *nondestructive* that piqued his curiosity. That's just not what one expects of fire!

We serve a God who acts in unexpected ways. Moses discovered that, as did many who came after him. Think of Gideon, Daniel, and Paul. When God acts in an unexpected way in your life, will He have your undivided attention?

—C. R. B.

3. When did God speak to Moses (v. 4)?

It was not until Moses had turned aside to investigate that God called to him from within the bush. Moses had been faithfully watching over the flock and probably letting his mind wander about his surroundings and perhaps past events. Because of the importance of His message, God knew He needed to take special measures to get Moses' focused attention.

The unusual sight of a burning (yet unconsumed) bush is now followed by unexpected words: Moses hears his name called from *out of the midst of the bush*. What a shock this must be! No doubt with some uncertainty, Moses answers *Here am I*. It is the first time that the Lord will speak to Moses, though it will not be the last.

Moses' response echoed that of Abraham (Gen. 22:11) and of Jacob (46:2) many years previously when God had called to them. Years later Samuel would respond the same way (1 Sam. 3:4). In each instance, God spoke the person's name twice (see verse 10 in Samuel's case). Perhaps He did that to make sure each listener had no doubt that he had heard correctly. The calls were specific, not happenstance. They were sincere calls that required a response. What an awe-inspiring moment that must have been for Moses! So what was God going to say to him?

4. What was God's first command to Moses after he responded to Him (v. 5)?

God immediately let Moses know he could approach just so far and no farther. God stopped him and told him to take off his sandals; he was on holy ground. To remove one's shoes expresses humility or reverence. Joshua, Moses' successor, will be told to do the same in Joshua 5:13–15. Moses' action is recounted in Acts 7:33.

These are good reminders for us that God deserves our highest respect when we approach Him in prayer or in other acts of worship. He is high and holy, not some "good buddy" we can approach glibly.

5. How did God identify Himself, and how did Moses respond (v. 6)?

By referring to himself as *the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, God establishes His ties with Moses' ancestors. Abraham has been dead for over 500 years at this point. Both Abraham's son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob have been dead over 400 years. We recall that Levi was one of Jacob's 12 sons, and Exodus 2:1, 2 establishes that Moses is descended from that tribe. God has initiated a special relationship with Moses' ancestors, whom we often call *the patriarchs*.

Exodus 2:24 says that God "remembered his covenant" with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The word *remembered* in a passage such as that suggests that God is about

to act in fulfillment of a promise He has made. He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He would give their descendants the land of Canaan as their home. He had revealed to Abraham that this would occur only after 400 years of enslavement (Genesis 15:13). The time for fulfilling that promise has come!

Of course, Moses likely is thinking about none of this at this point. He is too awestruck by the sight and sound before him to make any of those connections to history just yet. All he can do is hide his face, for he is aware enough of who God is that he is *afraid to look upon* Him (compare Genesis 32:30).

In verses 7–12 (not in today's printed text), God assures Moses that He is indeed aware of His people's suffering in Egypt. He tells Moses that He has "come down" (v. 8) to help them. Perhaps Moses takes heart at hearing such an announcement. But the Lord's words to him in verse 10 likely deflate whatever sense of hope he possesses to that point: "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

SIGNIFICANT REVELATION (Exodus 3:13-15)

6. What concerned Moses about telling the people of Israel that God had sent him to help them (v. 13)?

Verse 11 (not in today's text) presents Moses' first objection to God's plan with the question, "Who am I?" God's assurance was that He would not let Moses do this alone but would personally be with him (v. 12). Moses' second objection, in the text before us, can be summarized by the question, "Who are You?" Moses believes that the *children of Israel* will want to know the specific identity of the God whom Moses will say has spoken to him.

Most of the people will understand that the fathers include Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the people have been in bondage in a foreign land for 400 years. Many probably have lost touch with their spiritual roots. Whatever deity these people believe in seems to have forgotten them and left them to languish in their misery. For a desert shepherd to show up out of nowhere with a claim to have a word from on high undoubtedly will be a bit much to many!

7. What did God reveal about Himself in His answer to Moses (v. 14)?

God's revelation of himself to Moses as *I Am That I Am* is one of the simplest yet most profound descriptions of Him in the Bible. Essentially this phrase expresses the self-existence of God; He simply *is*. In other words, there has never been a time when God did not exist; and there will never be a time when He does not exist—a concept that is beyond the finite human mind's ability to grasp. The name may also call attention to God's unchanging nature (Malachi 3:6).

Some have suggested alternative meanings of the Hebrew word rendered as *I Am*, including "I will be what I will be." This idea highlights how God reveals himself "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1). But in light of Jesus' frequent use of the phrase "I Am," the previous understanding is probably the most acceptable.

*Talking Points are designed to foster genuine discussion (life application).

What Do You Think?

How can we be encouraged by God's self-description I Am?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Look up the definition of the rare word *aseity*
- Contrast God's I Am with the various ways culture uses I am (song lyrics, etc.)

8. What further truth is revealed in God's name (v. 15)?

God then spelled it out clearly. Moses was to say, "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you" (Exod. 3:15). That name, which remains forever, should have revealed to the Israelites that their God was present and was going to help them through this man whom He was sending. His self-existence was assurance of His continuous presence then and in the days to come.

Twice in verses 14, 15 God mentions sending Moses to *the children of Israel*. Previously Moses had acted as a deliverer, or so he thought, when he killed an Egyptian. But Moses was not acting as a sent person at that time. Only as one truly sent by God, acting according to God's plan and timing, can Moses fulfill what he is being called to do.

Further study of this name of God would also reveal not only that He is the self-existent, covenant-keeping God but also that He is loyal in His relationships to His people. This is especially encouraging because this is true both of His loyalty to the chosen people of Israel and to those who are His church age children.

Exodus 6:6-7 describes God promising to redeem Israel: "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." Relationship with people was and is important to God.

The covenant-keeping God had just revealed Himself to Moses in a meaningful, significant way. Before he could inspire the people to follow him, however, Moses needed to believe what he had just learned. He needed to be sure of God's presence.

What Do You Think?

In what ways can you help ensure that God's name is a memorial to future generations?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Family Life
- Church involvement
- Missions support
- Prayer

PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1.** Faithfulness in ordinary tasks often opens extraordinary opportunities for us (Exodus 3:1,2).
- 2.** When our hearts are right with God, we are sensitive to how He might direct us (vs. 3,4).
- 3.** We can never fully honor God unless we know something of His holiness (vs. 5,6).
- 4.** Our service is doomed to failure if it is done in our name and for our glory (v. 13).
- 5.** Only a God who is self-existent is worthy of our devotion (v. 14).
- 6.** We must have God's authority behind any work we presume to do for Him (v. 15).

CONCLUSION

Getting Educated

Stephen described Moses as “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). Moses likely became quite a scholar in his day. As the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, he was a prince in the royal court with great possibilities ahead of him.

Yet there were certain vital lessons that not even the wisdom of the Egyptians could teach Moses. This is not to downplay formal education; it is simply to acknowledge that formal education has its limitations in one’s spiritual development. As educated as Moses was in the culture of his time, he seems to have been that ignorant in regard to spiritual matters. Stephen also pointed out that when Moses killed the Egyptian who was mistreating one of the Hebrews, he firmly believed that his countrymen would recognize him as their hero and fall in step behind his leadership. This highly educated man was badly mistaken in that regard.

It would take another 40 years of watching sheep in the desert country before Moses was deemed “educated enough” by the Lord for the task of being a deliverer. By then Moses had learned that the one who believes himself unworthy of being used by God is really in the best position to be shaped and molded toward His holy purpose. Regardless of one’s level of formal education, this is probably the toughest “school” of all!

PRAYER

Father, we admit that we are not very good at waiting. Help us to trust You to accomplish Your good purpose in us, to complete in us what You have begun. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God’s work is best done in His way and timing.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In next week’s lesson we will see who God is through a covenant with His people. Study Exodus 20:1-11 **“God’s Covenant with Israel.”**

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