



Sunday School Lesson for September 19, 2004.
Released on: September 14, 2004.

Study: Exodus 3:1-12 "God Raised Up a Deliverer"
Questions and answers are found below.

Devotional Reading: Exodus 3:13-17.
Background Scripture: Exodus 3-4.

TIME: 1445 B.C. PLACE: Mount Sinai

Golden Text: "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10)."

INTRODUCTION

Not many people would argue the fact that Moses is one of the Bible's better-known characters. How many of us hear his name and immediately visualize Charlton Heston portraying Moses in "The Ten Commandments," or envision Moses' walking (shepherding) staff, or his white hair that was turned after his encounter with God on Mt. Sinai, or the miraculous way in which Moses' Hebrew mother saved his life when he was an infant by hiding him in a woven basket? I am awe-stricken when I think about how God: 1) saved baby Moses, 2) caused Moses to be found by an Egyptian princess, 3) had Moses' own sister bring Moses' mother to nurse him for the princess, and 4) provided a salary to Moses' mother for raising the child she gave birth to! [See Exodus 2:1—10 for Moses' birth; and 2:11—25 for his life up to today's lesson.] This story beautifully illustrates God's omniscience and omnipotence.

Moses' life's story teaches us that followers of Christ are not called to retire—contrary to the world's view of this much-anticipated career milestone. Moses realized this after he was summoned by God at the tender age of 80-years-old. Can you imagine working until you reach the age of 80? What about beginning a job at this age? After studying this week's lesson each of us should be reminded that when God calls us to kingdom work—to His glory and for the benefit of His people, He also equips us for the same. We should not hesitate when we receive our "work assignment." You will not find a better boss for whom to work than God. And, as someone has made popular the saying, "God's benefits and retirement plans are out of this world!"

LESSON BACKGROUND

Moses may have thought himself blessed to be living peacefully in Midian. Although raised in royal affluence by an Egyptian princess, he had fled from Egypt, fearful that he would be pursued by officers from Egypt intent on arresting him and taking him back for a murder trial or perhaps for execution without trial.

He must have felt blessed to meet Reuel (Exodus 2:18), who was also called Jethro (3:1). Moses married Jethro's daughter, had at least two sons, and settled down to shepherd his father-in-law's sheep. At a time when retirement might have seemed imminent, Moses was made aware that years of leading God's people lay ahead of him before he died at the age of 120 years (Deut. 34:7).

Exodus 3:1-12

V1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

V2 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.

V3 Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

V4 So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

V5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

V6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your 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.

V7 And the Lord said, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

V8 So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

V9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

V10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

V11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

V12 So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

BURNING BUSH (Exodus 3:1—3)

Question 1: What was the name of Moses' father-in-law, and what was his occupation?

Moses met his future father-in-law after he, "fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian (3:15)." The man's name was Reuel, or Jethro (4:18), and he was "the priest of Midian (3:16)." Midian is also where Moses found his bride, Zipporah, one of Reuel's seven daughters. It is in Exodus that we read where Moses fathered a son named, Gershom, by Zipporah (3:22).

Question 2: What is another name for Mount Horeb?

Mount Horeb is also known as "the mountain of God," and Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:1; 17:6). Moses would later lead the children of Israel to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19). This is the same place where God appeared before Moses, and later gave him the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

Question 3: What do we know about the "Angel of the Lord?"

According to Scripture, the Angel of the Lord speaks and acts as/for God (Gen. 16:10; 22:11-18; and Judg. 2:1-5). Whatever conclusion one can come to, it is understood that the Angel of the Lord communicates with those whom God wants to communicate. As in Moses' case, Moses got the message and became a deliverer of the children of Israel.

We should point out that Moses as deliverer can be likened to God. In what way? Moses' name was given to him by the Egyptian princess who found him. It means, "born," or "He Who Draws Out." Exodus 2:10 reads, "And the child grew, and she (Moses' birth mother) brought him to Pharaoh's daughter (the Egyptian princess), and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water." In this manner, Moses' name can refer to the living God, who is the true Deliverer, and also to Moses, who would deliver the children of Israel from the Red Sea (Exodus 14 and 15). The one who was "drawn out of water" would be the means of drawing the children of Israel out of water.

HOLY GROUND (Exodus 3:4—6)

Question 4: What was strange about the bush Moses saw at Mount Horeb?

As a desert dweller, and a shepherd, it would not have been unusual for Moses to have seen a bush burning in the "backside of the desert (3:1)," which was to say the west side of Mount Horeb. But what was unusual about this particular occurrence was that the burning bush did not burn up; it continued to burn without burning out or being "consumed (3:2)."

In addition to this strange appearance of the Angel of the Lord in the burning bush, Moses heard the voice of God call out his name, "Moses, Moses (3:4)!" Surely Moses never experienced a burning-but-non-consuming bush from which came the voice of God!

Question 5: Why was the area around the burning bush considered holy ground?

The ground or dirt around the burning bush was not holy in and of itself. The presence of the Lord at that place caused the area to be holy. This ought to remind us that any place where we encounter God's presence should be respected as being holy. This can be our formal places of worship, our private prayer room or closet, our homes, our cars, our places of work, and within us individually. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit dwells within God's temple, and that He can not dwell in any unclean place. An unclean "temple" can refer to our bodies, the local church, or the spiritual church, or the universal body of believers. [Ref. Romans 8:9—1; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; and 6:19,20.]

Question 6: How did God identify Himself to Moses and why was this important?

God continued to speak to Moses from the burning bush by saying, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (Exodus 3:6)." Though Moses recognized that he was standing in the presence of no ordinary being, he now became fully aware of the One who was addressing him. The voice identified Himself as the God of the great patriarchs of Hebrew history: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Even though Moses had been raised up in the Egyptian palace, God's identification to Moses was important because Moses was being given a personal and divine introduction to the one true God; the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had worshipped. As a side note, Moses most likely was taught about his Hebrew heritage by his own natural mother who nursed him as an infant and continued to care for him as he grew to manhood (Exodus 2:7-10).

ISRAEL'S CRY (Exodus 3:7—12)

Question 7: Why did God speak to Moses at this time?

God spoke to Moses at this time because of His compassion for His chosen people, the children of Israel. God said, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians (Exo. 3:7,8a)."

Let us stop and think for a moment of God's love and mercy for His "people." Notwithstanding, we are not in Egypt today as the children of Israel were—and in reference to this particular scripture, but we can still identify ourselves as being His "people," His children, His called, His beloved. This is an awesome consideration! Just imagine, God sees us in our oppression. He hears our cries. He knows our sorrows. And He comes to our rescue to deliver us. This is enough to shout about simply at the very thought of His attentiveness! Hallelujah!

That God does not seem to respond immediately to our prayers or deliver us from our troubles might tempt us to believe that He is unconcerned about our plight. Israel was not forgotten by God Almighty, however, and neither are we!

Question 8: Why was God going to lead the Hebrew slaves to Canaan, and what promise did this fulfill?

The land of Canaan was promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's covenant to each of them was still in effect. Hebrews 11:9 refers to Canaan as, "the land of promise." And Isaac and Jacob are referred to in this same passage of scripture as having been "heirs with him (Abraham) of the same promise (Heb. 11:10)."

The six nations mentioned in Exodus 3:8 (and Deut. 7:1) occupied the region generally known as Canaan. Israel, Palestine, and Canaan all refer to the same general geographic area. These nations would be displaced by Israel once God responded to "the cry of the children of Israel (Exo. 3:9)."

Isn't it a wonderful thing that God does not forget His promises to us? For Him to do so would refute (or prove false) His being God! Our loving Father is faithful to His

word. Let us therefore become more committed to our studying of God's Holy Word, for this is the only way that we can truly know what it is that God promises.

Question 9: Before whom would Moses appear when he returned to Egypt?

Moses listened carefully as God told him that he (Moses) would be the one who God would, "send.. to Pharaoh (to) bring (God's) people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt (Exo. 3:10)."

Moses was to appear before the pharaoh when he returned to Egypt. Since the man who was pharaoh when Moses lived in Egypt had died (probably Thutmose III-who died about 1447 BC), the current pharaoh in place was not the same person (it is speculated that this was Amenhotep II). [Note that "pharaoh" is a title-like king, prince, governor, etc.-and not a proper name.]

As those who are older can attest to, what you might have been willing to do forty years ago may not have the same attraction today. Besides, Moses had previously been unsuccessful in getting the people of Israel to submit to his leadership. Do we fault him for doubting that the children of Israel would be willing to listen to and follow him now at his age, and as a lowly, fugitive shepherd—at that?

Question 10: What excuse did Moses offer for not going back to Egypt?

Moses probably assumed that he would have to attempt the rescue of the children of Israel through his own strength and ingenuity. And, since he was not the man that he had once been, the Lord's command was a disheartening one in Moses' eyes. There is a message in this subject for us. When we are faced with mountain-sized challenges, let us remember that we serve a God who created the mountain, and who will provide us with mountain-sized solutions!

However, Moses offered five excuses to God for not going back to Egypt. He asserted that he was unqualified (3:11), he questioned his authority to demand the Israelites' release (3:13,14), he mentioned Israel's likeliness to not accept him as their leader (4:1-5), he used his speech impediment as a barrier to lead (4:10-12), and finally, Moses suggested that God send someone else to deliver the children of Israel (4:13).

CONCLUSION

God appreciates our honesty with Him—because He knows what we are thinking anyway. But, have you been making excuses to God for why you can not be active in some way that He has revealed to you that He wants you to become active in?

I took piano, organ, and voice lessons as a child—straight through my senior year of high school. I learned how to read music, but not how to "play by ear" as my teenaged son does beautifully! My being asked to play at various worship services through the years has always been a moment of great anxiety for me because of my "I am not eloquent" assessment of my musical abilities... pretty much the same way—I imagine—that Moses probably felt standing before the burning bush continuing his conversation with God. But, those times when I have completely forgotten about my shortcomings, and concentrated instead on playing as best I could that music which glorified God, everything sounded pleasing!

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that when we believers focus on what man thinks about us, rather than focus on what God thinks about us, we will mess up

every time. The prophet Jeremiah was a young and hesitant leader when he started out-contrary to Moses' seniority, but the word of the Lord went forth and told him, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:4,5)." To which Jeremiah replied, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth (1:6)." But, God told him, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you (1:7–8).

"God told Jeremiah something similar to what He told Moses many years earlier, and what He's telling some of you today, "Go to all whom (He) sends you, and whatever (He) commands you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for (He) is with you to deliver you."

The Apostle Paul said, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ (Galatians 1:10). Paul was not motivated by man's satisfaction, nor was man the source of his authority. He continually sought the approval of God. He did not base his decisions on the opinions of other people. Instead he single-mindedly aimed at pleasing God (Ref. Philippians 3:14, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."). As an apostle Paul was a leader, but he was always a "bondservant of Christ."

May each of you remember to Whom you belong. God is able and willing to keep you as you embark on or grow in His calling on your life. "(You) can do all things through Christ who strengthens (you) (Philippians 4:13)!"

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We may never encounter what Moses saw here, but God still has ways of getting our attention (Exodus 3:1–3)
2. The Lord often waits till we are receptive to His intervention in our lives (3:4)
3. To enter God's presence requires a reverent acknowledgement on our part (3:5)
4. We can be assured that God knows and cares about every difficulty His people are going through (3:6–9)
5. If we long for a remedy to some problem, we should be ready to be part of God's solution (10–12)

PRAYER

Dear Father of us all, we thank You for the witness of Your leaders that speaks to us from the pages of the Bible. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Nehemiah, Peter, and Paul all have something to teach us from both their successes and their failures. May all our leaders and all our followers be united in following You. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

The leader's call: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1)."

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

A great deal happened between the commissioning of Moses and his success in bringing Israel out of Egyptian bondage and leading them through the wilderness to Canaan. At the end of his life, Moses called on his people to renew the covenant given them at Sinai to guide them as they settled into their God-given homeland.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Lesson 4: September 26, 2004 "Becoming God's People"

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 29:2–15

Read: Deuteronomy 29:1–29

Time: 1405 BC

Place: Plains of Moab

Golden Text: "That you may enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today, that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut. 29:12,13)."

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