

THE CALL OF MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 3:1-22

LESSON 48 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 3:1-22

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.

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.

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;

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I God's Revelation of Himself to Moses

1 Moses tends Jethro's sheep in the vicinity of Mt. Sinai, Exodus 3:1;

Genesis 39:1-6, 22, 23

¹ And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

² And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

³ And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

⁴ And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.

⁵ And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

⁶ And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was *a* goodly *person*, and well favoured.

²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

²³ The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that* *was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

I Samuel 16:19-23

¹⁹ Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which *is* with the sheep.

²⁰ And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.

²¹ And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

²² And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

²³ And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Galatians 1:17

¹⁷ Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

2 God appears in a burning bush, exciting Moses' curiosity, Exodus 3:2, 3;

Luke 19:2, 3

² And, behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

³ And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

John 1:46

⁴⁶ And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

3 Moses' interest in this manifestation of God's power gives God an opportunity to call him, Exodus 3:4;

Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

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.

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.

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?

¹² And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

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.

¹⁶ Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely

John 1:47-49

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

⁴⁸ Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

4. God reveals Himself to Moses, producing in Moses an attitude of reverence, Exodus 3:5, 6;

Joshua 5:13-15

¹³ And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, *Art* thou for us, or for our adversaries?

¹⁴ And he said, Nay; but *as* captain of the host of the LORD *am* I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

¹⁵ And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And Joshua did so.

Daniel 10:8, 9

⁸ Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

⁹ Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

Revelation 1:17

¹⁷ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

II God's Revelation of His Purposes to Moses

1. God reveals His interest in the Children of Israel: He saw; He heard; He knew; and He came down, Exodus 3:7, 8;

Psalms 139:1-12

¹ (To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.) O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.

² Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

³ Thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways.

⁴ For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

⁵ Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

⁶ *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.

⁷ Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.

⁹ *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

¹² Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.

Genesis 18:21

²¹ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

2. God reveals His intentions concerning the Hebrew people, Exodus 3:9, 10;

visited you, and *seen* that which is done to you in Egypt:

¹⁷ And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

¹⁸ And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

¹⁹ And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

²⁰ And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

²¹ And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:

²² But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Acts 7:29-35

²⁹ Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

³⁰ And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

³¹ When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

³² *Saying*, I *am* the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

³³ Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

³⁴ I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

³⁵ This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

III God's Revelation of His Eternal Power to Moses

1. Moses staggers at the immensity of the responsibility, feeling his incapability, Exodus 3:11.

2. God assures Moses of continued interest and concern for him, Exodus 3:12;

Jeremiah 1:7, 8

⁷ But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

⁸ Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

3. Moses requests authority and receives a sublime revelation of God's eternal existence and name, Exodus 3:13-15;

Isaiah 6:1-5

¹ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I *am* undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Mark 12: 26, 27

²⁶ And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

IV God's Preliminary Commission and His Instructions to Moses

1. The commission is outlined to Moses, Exodus 3:16, 17;

Acts 26:15-18

¹⁵ And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I *am* Jesus whom thou persecutest.

¹⁶ But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

¹⁷ Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

¹⁸ To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Psalm 103:7

⁷ He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

2. Moses is instructed to appear before Pharaoh, Exodus 3:18.

3. God forewarns Moses of Pharaoh's refusal, and tells how Israel will be delivered, Exodus 3:19-22;

Isaiah 6:9,10

⁹ And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

NOTES:

We now find Moses, the future leader of Israel, in the wilderness on the side of Mt. Sinai, tending the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro, which was the last step in this phase of schooling that Moses received from the hand of God.

Someone once said that "renown may have obscurity for a pedestal"; and we find it a solemn truth that those whom God will use must first spend a time apparently apart from Him -- sometimes in "wilderness and desert places," sometimes in valleys of affliction and sorrow, and sometimes in places of great distress and anxiety. These schooling periods are a part of God's plan to bring us nearer to Him; but often we see that they are brought to us by some failure, haste, weakness, or lack on our part.

In Moses' case this period probably came because of his haste in prematurely assuming what he felt was God's will for him. He saw an injustice being done to one of his people; and since the sufferer was in no position to defend himself, Moses took the matter into his own hands. Perhaps he felt that he would thereby lead a revolt against all injustices toward his people, and free Israel from the yoke of bondage. But that was not God's way nor method, neither was it God's time. God wanted to bring it to pass so no man would receive glory or honour for the deliverance. God wanted His people to worship and honour Him; and, to teach them that worship, He planned to deliver them by His own strong and mighty Hand.

Moses' call was genuine. He felt the early promptings of God in his heart and was eager to respond. But haste cost him the respect of his people, thereby rendering him powerless to help them, for a time. When we go ahead of God, even in what we clearly know to be eventually God's plan, others will not be able to see what we correctly see as God's call to us. But when we wait for God to work out all the details and put us in the place He designs, everyone will recognise God's hand in the matter and will respect our calling.

The fact that God appeared in the burning bush was to be a proof to Moses that God had sent him and that God would be with him always. It could be said to be a symbol of Israel in her various distresses and persecutions -- in the fire, but not consumed. It was also a symbol of the church -- in persecutions often, in the midst of enemies, in the region of the shadow of death, but not consumed. It was, in a way, a symbol of every follower of Christ -- persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; walking in the midst of the fire, but not burned.

When he saw the burning bush, Moses turned aside to see what it was. A poet, unknown to us by name, expressed this

beautifully when he said.

**"Far seen across the sandy wild,
While, like a solitary child,
He thoughtless roamed and free,
One towering thorn was wrapt in flame,
Bright without blaze it went and came:
Who would not turn and see?**

**"Along the mountain-hedges green
The scattered sheep at will may glean
The desert's spicy stores:
The while, with undivided heart,
The shepherd talks with God apart,
And, as he talks, adores."**

He who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," forgot all about the temporal responsibilities of the few sheep and turned his eyes toward God. And because he did, God could talk to him and call him for a very important work. How many of us miss many blessings that God would give us, merely because we do not "turn aside to see" when God draws near!

This revelation was given by God Himself Who appeared in the burning flame. And where God is, there must be reverence by man. Moses was commanded to take off his shoes in the presence of his God: God Almighty, the Lord God Jehovah, the Great I AM! In this same manner Joshua, too, revered God when he met the Lord on the plains before Jericho.

The commission given Moses was a huge one. Great issues were at stake and much would depend on the one whom God chose to lead His people into the Promised Land. One cannot blame Moses for saying "Who am I?" When God is calling to positions of responsibility in His service, a person does not feel self-sufficient. The human part of us draws back from such great responsibility. The Apostle Paul said of his call, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Corinthians 9:16). But God's commands are His enablings, and with an order there is given the required strength and wisdom.

There was great comfort and reassurance in the answer that God gave Moses. "Certainly I will be with thee." That meant that Moses would be the servant, not the master. It meant that the work would surely succeed and there would be no lack of grace or power. It also meant that even though Pharaoh would resist the petition, Moses would have an audience with him. How wonderful to have the assurance of that promise when we go forward to battle the foes of righteousness! "Certainly I will be with thee" is a password to every difficult passage and closed door, is strength when the battle is hard, and victory when the "enemy shall come in like a flood."

There are some passages of Scripture that skeptics many times willingly misunderstand and upon which they base their loud contentions that God is unjust. One of these places is the last few verses of our lesson. God gave Moses a quick summary of the manner in which Israel would be delivered, and said that they would borrow from the Egyptians and thereby spoil the nation through this deliberate action. Unbelievers point to this incident with scorn, saying that innocent Egyptians were thus made to suffer for the ambitions and decrees of the despotic rulers over them, under whom perhaps even the Egyptians suffered.

But there is no basis for argument. The Israelites were a free people, enslaved because the Egyptians feared the growing strength of the people to whom they owed a great debt of gratitude. The Israelites were made to work without compensation -- and even without furnished materials for a time -

- in addition to having their newborn babies destroyed. And each member of the nation benefiting from this cruelty was obligated, at least in a material way, to the Israelites.

A correct meaning of the term borrow, as used here, will clear up the difficulty. It literally means to ask, request, require, or demand. God instructed the Israelites to demand what was rightly theirs for their services, and it was done in that spirit and was not thought of as a loan by either the Israelites or the Egyptians. It was theirs by virtue of the fact that they had earned it -- and much more. If accounts had been fairly balanced at the time of the exodus, Egypt would still have been in considerable arrears. God permitted the Children of Israel to be compensated in this way.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was Moses when he heard the call of God?
2. What was Moses doing at that time?
3. What other men of God also went through a period of schooling before they were best used of God?
4. What supernatural manifestation did God send to cause Moses to turn aside from his everyday pursuits?
5. What were Moses' actions when he realised God was speaking?
6. When God told Moses what he was to do, what did Moses say?
7. Was Moses right in saying what he did, and what reply did God give to him?
8. By what name did God identify Himself at this time?
9. What was this supernatural manifestation supposed to demonstrate to Moses in the years following?
10. Tell what the broad outline of God's plan for Israel, as told to Moses here, included.