

LESSON 18 THE REVELATION TO MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH

READING: Exodus 3, 4:1-17, 27-31; Acts 7:30-36

AIM: To show how God revealed Himself to Moses and His purpose for doing so.

1. BACKGROUND

After spending 40 years as a shepherd, Moses was finally prepared for his life's work – like many of God's servants – in exile and solitude. In the desert at **Horeb**, close to Mt Sinai, he tended sheep. This is a very lonely place, well suited for the revelations of God. It is noted for huge mountains of harsh, jagged, granite, rising one above another. The very ruggedness of the mountains and hills, their height and steepness, as well as the deep silence of the valleys, suggests the greatness of Creation and the relative insignificance of man. Meanwhile, important events occurred in Egypt. **“The King of Egypt died; and the children of Israel signed by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning and God remembered his Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.”** (Exod. 2:23-24).

2. THE DIVINE COMMISSION AT THE BURNING BUSH - Exodus 3:1-12

As he tended his sheep, Moses saw a remarkable sight. An angel of God appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a burning bush – but the bush was not consumed (Ex. 3:1-2). When Moses turned aside to see this strange sight, God's angel addressed him and told him not to come any closer but to remove his shoes – for he was on holy ground. The angel then revealed that he was acting for the one God whose promise had been given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God had heard Israel's cry of affliction in Egypt and had come to deliver them. To this end, he had appointed Moses as their deliverer, and Moses was instructed to lead forth the nation to worship God in Mount Sinai. In token of this, God set before him the sign of the burning, yet unconsumed bush. Doubtless, Moses was to see in the bush that burned the purpose of God with His people Israel. Although chastised by the fire of affliction, they would not be destroyed (Jer. 30:11). Out of the affliction they were now experiencing and would continue to experience throughout their history. Their divine preservation would be revealed. This would indicate God's purpose with them and so through it all. God would be made manifest.

3. GOD'S NAME – Exod. 3:13-15

Moses desired to know God's Name so that he could answer Israel's query. We have already seen the significance of the name of particular individuals associated with the purpose of God. The name was more than a method of distinguishing one from another. It was expressive of the character or mission of the person.

Abram's name was changed to Abraham (a father of many nations) because it showed God's purpose with him (Gen. 17:5). Likewise, Jacob was changed to Israel for a Sreason and Moses means “drawn out” because he was drawn out of water (Exod. 2:10). Jesus means “Salvation of God” because that is His mission (Is. 49:6). Therefore, God told Moses the Name by which He was to be known to Israel. Yahweh (which appears in the A.V. as Jehovah) is God's Name which embraces redemption – His future purpose and manifestation (Exod. 6:2-8). It comes from the same root as the word translated “I am”, also rendered “I will be” as an alternative in the R.V. (Exod. :14-15).

Moses was to go and tell Israel that Yahweh was about to deliver them. Read carefully Exod. 6:2-8). God said that He was known as God Almighty to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but now was to be known as Yahweh to Israel. He remembered the covenant affecting Israel and was now going to redeem them by bringing them into the land which He promised as a heritage to their Fathers.

God's great purpose of redemption was shown in the **Lord Jesus Christ**, whose life and character was a supreme manifestation of the qualities embodied in God's Name (Exod. 34:5-7); John 1:14,17,17:6). It is also being shown, albeit imperfectly, through the believers or brethren of Christ who are being called as a people for His Name (Acts. 15:14).

God's purpose will be completed when Christ returns to redeem His people and fulfil the covenant name of God, proclaimed when He was about to call Israel to be His special holy people. This will be when God's people are made partakers of divine nature (II Pet. 1:4).

4. **MESSAGE TO ELDERS – Exodus 3:16-22**

Moses was instructed to tell the elders of Israel of the promised deliverance. With them, he was to go and ask Pharaoh's permission for Israel to meet with their God and make sacrifices. God knew the request would be refused. Israel's deliverance was not to be accomplished immediately; therefore, God prepared Moses for the delay. In God's purpose Egypt and Israel had great lessons to learn.

- (1) Egypt's might and power were to be crushed so that the nation would recognise God's superiority over Egyptian gods (Exod. 12:12).
- (2) Israel was to be further taught to trust God. Finally they were to be favoured and leave Egypt with great wealth (Gen. 15:14).

5. **MOSES' DIFFICULTIES - Exodus 4: 1-17**

In spite of God's promised help Moses was apprehensive about acting as Israel's leader. He had become humble in those years of solitude. Forty years' absence from his people made him feel they would not accept him as their deliverer.

He felt unfitted for such a work.
He thought Israel would neither believe nor listen to his message
He lacked confidence as a speaker.

What a contrast this was to the over-confident Moses who many years earlier had tried to take things into his own hands. God strengthened Moses and gave him special signs that his own brethren might be convinced God had sent him. The signs were:

- (1) The rod or staff that became a serpent;
- (2) The hand that turned leprous and was healed;
- (3) The waters of the river poured out upon the ground turned to blood.

The third sign was given in case the Israelites would not accept the first two. It would strike at the sacred Nile, the great god of the land.

6. **AARON THE SPOKESMAN - Exodus 4:27-31**

In spite of these signs Moses was still overawed by the greatness of the tasks before him. He was "slow of speech and of a slow tongue" (Exod. 4:10). God assured him that He would teach him what to say. Still Moses hesitated and God's anger was roused. Aaron was promised as his spokesman and the honour of leadership was divided between them.

Directed by God, Aaron set out to meet Moses in the wilderness. They returned to Goshen and summoned the elders of Israel to tell them the glad news of coming deliverance. "And the people believed ... they bowed their heads and worshipped".

7. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The bush that burned but was not consumed appears as a symbol of God's intention to deliver His people out of their afflictions and to reveal Himself in their redemption. Israel were reminded that in all their affliction God would be with them as He would be with Moses (Exod. 3:12; Isa 63:9).

The spiritual import of God's Name revealed to Moses is seen in the mind, character and resurrection to spirit nature of our Lord Jesus Christ; as well as in those who will be his at his coming; and in the whole earth when finally, God is "all in all"(1 Cor. 15:28).

This unfolding purpose finds simple expression in the use of the name, **Father**, by Jesus. God's purpose with the earth is the development of His great family with Jesus – the only begotten Son and those "in Christ"-related directly to God through Christ by "adoption" and "marriage".

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"The Visible Hand of God", chapters 9 and 10.

"The Ways of Providence", chapters 9 and 10.

"Elpis Israel", part 2, chapter 4.

"God's Way", chapter 5.

"Theophany", chapter 4.

QUESTIONS

1. How was the incident of the burning bush an important event in the history of Israel?
2. What was the reason for God revealing His Name to Moses at the burning bush?
3. What was the significance of the bush that burned but was not consumed?
4. What was God's reason for sending Moses back to Egypt?
5. What were the difficulties Moses felt about leading Israel out of Egypt, and how were they overcome?