

# EXODUS

## THE GOD WHO RESCUES

---

### SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 3:1-22

To understand more about how God appeared to Moses and revealed Himself to him.

#### Read the Text:

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 And 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 at God. 7 Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Ex. 3:13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. 16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, 17 and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'" 18 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. 21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians." (Exodus 3:1-22)

#### Study the Text:

### The Mountain of God

After the conclusion of chapter 2 that included the death of the former Pharaoh who sought to kill Moses, the institution of a new Pharaoh equally as cruel to the people of Israel, and the prayers of the people of Israel being heard by God. Now, chapter 3 brings us back to Moses, who was "keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian" (Ex. 3:1). And immediately, we are thrust into one of the most important events in

human history wherein God reveals to Moses His covenant name at Horeb, “the mountain of God” (Ex. 3:1). Below is a breakdown of some of the key details.

### **HOREB**

What is significant about Horeb? Horeb is was located west of Midian and is likely the modern *Jebel Musa*, which roughly translates to “Mountain of Moses.” It is here and in Deuteronomy called Horeb, but more commonly referred to as *Mount Sinai*. Sinai is a central location for all kinds of important encounters with God throughout the Old Testament. Sinai is where the Ten Commandments were issued (Ex. 19:20b-21a). It’s where the people of God gathered after consecrating themselves to hear the laws from the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:21b-24:8). It is the site of Moses’ 40 day and 40 night fast, wherein he also receives the instructions for the tabernacle (Ex. 25-31). Moses descends the mountain in Exodus 32 to disrupt the idolatrous worship of the golden calf (Ex. 32), and again ascends Sinai to receive the tables of the covenant that would replace the ones he broke in anger because of their disobedience (Ex. 34). All in all, Horeb is a crucial location to the Exodus story and in the retelling of many of these stories in Numbers and Deuteronomy as well.

### **THE ANGEL OF THE LORD**

For the first (and only) time in Exodus, we are also confronted with one of the more confusing titles in the Old Testament, “The angel of the LORD (Yahweh).” Who is this figure? The Hebrew construction is perhaps best rendered, “The angels that is Yahweh.” In other words, it is not simply an indefinite angel who has been commissioned as a messenger, but the LORD who is revealing in definite time and space revelation as an angel. The question is, “Why?” Two doctrines demand this kind of action: omnipresence and holiness.

God typically appears (theophany) in time and space as an object in time and space. Douglas Stuart says it this way: “Because of his omnipresence, God is not limited to any space. Therefore, when he occupies a small space for purposes of revelation, he typically does so by *representation*.”<sup>1</sup> God sometimes chooses humans to be His representative through the prophets, and ultimately becomes human in the second person of the Triune Godhead, Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, however, prior to the incarnation of Christ, God appears and takes the form of an angel sometimes as well.

Because of the holiness of God, which would otherwise kill a person who stood in the presence of God (Ex. 33:20), the angel allows for God to engage with humanity in a real and tangible manner without issuing the fullness of Himself in those moments. The angel, therefore, shouldn’t be seen as a mere angel. He should also not be seen as Jesus Christ because Jesus is never called or directly connected to the angel of the LORD in any passage in the New Testament. Is the angel of the LORD a pre-incarnate Jesus? The Bible never says that. The angel of the LORD is simply God embodying an angelic form for specific tasks that require His presence over a human or angelic representative.

### **THEOPHANY**

This passage also presents us with a theophany in the burning bush, and so now might a good time to give a small explanation to what theophany is. Theophany simply means, “appearance of God.” Anytime God actually appears in the Bible, it is considered a theophany. Not a vision, or an audible word, but an appearing. Again, the greatest theophany in human history is recorded in “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Here, in Exodus 3, the “bush was burning, yet it was not consumed”

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and Kenneth A. Mathews, vol. 2 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 112.

(Ex. 3:2). This was not a hallucination; God *appeared* in a limited form in this moment. The purpose of this appearing was to issue God's decree to "deliver them (the Israelites) out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8). And He would accomplish this through Moses (Ex. 3:9-12).

## The Name of God

Moses cannot fathom that God would use him for His grand redemptive purposes, and so he asks Him in verse 13: "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God responds: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14). This is the so-called tetragrammaton, יהוה, that is the covenant name of God typified in English as LORD (in all caps). This is not the first time God's name has been made known, contrary to popular belief. In Genesis 4:26, after Seth's son Enosh is born, it says, "At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD." However, throughout the generations of Jacob, the name of the LORD is not used and surely after generations in Egypt, it had been all but lost. God is revealing Himself again to His people in a personal and covenantal manner, similar to the way in which He did to their forefathers, and reemphasizes that His name will be this "forever", and that it should be "remembered throughout all generations" (Ex. 3:15).

Countless interpretations have been given concerning what the name means. In Hebrew, it is the first person common qual imperfect, and so it conveys the idea of continuing, unfinished action. It could be understood as "I am being that I am being," or "the One Who Always Is." The reality God permeates through every present moment in creation. There is no future or past for Him because He exists outside of space and time, for He created it. There is not ample space in this present study to explain the reasons in Hebrew for why His name should be pronounced Yahweh and not Jehovah, but sufficient evidence exists to support this. Yahweh is likely the more accurate phonetic pronunciation.

## The Deliverance of God

The remaining verses chronicle the way in which God will stretch out His hand and "strike Egypt with all the wonders," and "give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians" (Ex. 3:20-21). God will deal harshly with Egypt because of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, eventually resulting in the loss of every firstborn in every Egyptian family in the Passover (Ex. 12:29-32). The people of God, having been oppressed for years, would presumably have nothing of value to their name. However, the LORD would make it so that when the Hebrew women asked anyone for clothing or jewelry, it would be freely and willingly given to them (Ex. 3:22). God, in His supernatural power, can provide for His people through any means He chooses.

## What About Now?

One major takeaway from this passage is the limitless nature of God. Nothing prevents God from doing what He desires to do. He can appear in any form He chooses. He can provide in any manner He chooses. He can build up nations and tear them down. He can choose meek men to fulfill kingdom mandates. He is the One who simply is, the cause behind every action. Another takeaway is the faithfulness of God. Again, He appeals to the generational relationship He has had with the people of Israel as He begins His Exodus campaign with a generation of people that hardly know Him.

# Study Questions

## Day One

1. Read Exodus 3:1-2. What was Moses doing in the beginning of this passage? Where was he, and why was this place significant? How did God appear to Moses? How is God described and what does this title mean?
- 
- 

2. Read Exodus 3:3-6. How did Moses respond? What did God tell Moses to do, and why? How did God reveal Himself to Moses, and why is this important? What was Moses' response to God?
- 
- 

## Day Two

1. Read Exodus 3:7-12. What had the LORD seen? What had He come down to do? Where did He plan on leading His people? What did God command Moses to do, and how would God support Moses in this endeavor?
- 
- 

2. Read Exodus 3:13-14. What does Moses ask God? How does God respond? What is the significance of God's name that He gives to Moses? (Hint: See above notes)
- 
- 

## Day Three

1. Read Exodus 3:15. What is Moses to say to the people of Israel?
- 
- 

2. Read Exodus 3:16-18. What does God command Moses to do? Who are all of the inhabitants of land listed here? What does God tell Moses concerning how the elders of Israel will respond?
- 
- 

## Day Four

1. Read Exodus 3:19-20. Will the king of Egypt act favorably? What will God do in response to this?
- 
- 

2. Read Exodus 3:21-22. How will God provide for His people?
- 
-

**Discuss the Text:****Week 6 Discussion: Knowing God**

One of the biggest points of emphasis in this passage is the way in which God personally reveals Himself to Moses, and the expectation that God should be known by name for every generation following. God is a God who personally knows and interacts with His people. Talk as a group about the importance of knowing God. Not knowing *about* Him, but *knowing Him*.

1. Icebreaker: Do you know God?
2. Is it more natural for you to talk *about* God or to talk *to* God?
3. What does knowing God practically look like?
4. How does knowing God personally set Christianity apart from other religions?
5. How does Jesus Christ make knowing God even more personal?
6. What do you need to do to better know God and engage in your relationship with Him?

**Takeaways:**

1. God appears to Moses while he is in Midian as the angel of the LORD in a burning bush.
2. God tells Moses His covenant Name, the LORD (Yahweh).
3. God commissions Moses to go and confront Pharaoh and demand that His people be released.
4. God promises to strike against Egypt and to supernaturally provide for His own people.