

THE CALL OF MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 3:1-22

LESSON 48 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 3:1-22 (KJV)

3:1 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 *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 Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Notes:

Moses with the Sheep

When Moses fled from Pharaoh, he settled in Midian, where he remained forty years. We remember it was the Midianite merchantmen who took Joseph into Egypt. The descendants of the Midianites are among the Arabs today. Moses married the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian, and they must have been true in religion, because Jethro came to Moses in the wilderness after the Children of Israel had left Egypt, and blessed God for the mighty deliverance. He also offered sacrifices to the Lord, in which Moses and Aaron took part.

Moses had thought the Lord wanted him to help his people, the Israelites, but when he had tried to settle a difference between two of them, they had refused to listen. He believed they would have nothing to do with him, so he did not care to return to Egypt.

The manner of Moses' living was much different here from what it had been in Egypt. There he had lived in the palace of the king, had had servants to wait on him, and had enjoyed all the luxury of the royal court. Now he tended his father-in-law's flocks in the desert, working at a lowly occupation. But God had a purpose in it all, and was training Moses for a great work.

The Mountain of God

One day Moses led the flocks near to Mt. Horeb, which is also called Mt. Sinai. The Scripture calls it the mountain of God, and we shall study about other times that He made Himself known to the people, from this mountain. It was here that God gave the Law to the Israelites, and wrote it on the tables of stone. It is recorded that on this mountain God spake with Moses "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). God's speaking to Moses from the burning bush is the first of several supernatural appearances that the Lord made to Moses during his natural life.

The Call

It was probably very hot in the desert, and a fire was not too unusual. The fact that the bush was on fire did not excite Moses; but when that dry little shrub kept on burning, Moses was puzzled and went to see why it was not burnt up. God was watching to see what Moses would do; and when He saw him go toward the bush, He called to him.

The Lord has let the light of the Gospel shine out so that all men may see, but very few people are interested enough to turn aside and look for the cause of the light. Although the light of Christianity has always preceded civilization and millions of people are enjoying the blessings that it has brought to this country, not many are willing to give God the glory by answering His call and living for Him.

When God saw that Moses had noticed the miracle of the burning bush, He called to him, "Moses, Moses." Moses was quick to answer the call of God: "Here am I." How it pleases the heart of Jesus when people answer His call with "Here am I, at Your service"! Those are the men, women, boys, and girls whom God

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

can use.

God told Moses to take off his shoes because the ground he was standing on was holy. For the moment it had become the house of God, because God was meeting with man, and He wanted Moses to reverence it. We cannot emphasize too much the necessity of honoring the house of God. Any place where people gather to worship the Lord in the spirit, is the house of God. When Jacob heard God speak to him at Bethel, where he had the dream about the angels ascending and descending between Heaven and earth, he erected an altar there in the open field and called it the house of God. We must remember that God sees everything we do; and when we come into His presence we must come quietly, in humility, dressed to please Him, and with a spirit of prayer in our hearts. We should leave behind all thoughts of our temporal affairs, and worship God in the beauty of holiness.

Deliverance Promised

God told Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were the ancestors of Moses. He had not forgotten the promises He had made that through their seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He had also promised that they should inherit the land of Canaan. So far it looked very discouraging because the Children of Israel were only slaves of the Egyptians, working under cruel taskmasters.

But God assured Moses that He had seen all their distress and had heard their groaning, and the time was coming when He would deliver them and give them the promised inheritance. It must have thrilled Moses to think that his people were really going to be free, and not have to suffer any more.

Humble Before God

But when God asked Moses to be the leader to bring the Hebrews out of captivity, he cried: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He was not the impetuous person he had been forty years before when he had tried to help his people by his own strength. Now he was humbled so that he had to lean upon the Lord, and God said, "Certainly I will be with thee." And if God be for us, who can be against us?

It is the humble people whom God can use in His work. When He called Saul to be king, Saul answered, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (I Samuel 9:21). However, after Saul had become proud and had disobeyed God, Samuel reminded him that when he was little in his own eyes God had made him king, but when he became exalted the kingdom was taken from him.

When God called Jeremiah to be a prophet, Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." But God said, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 1:6, 8). And Jeremiah became such a wonderful prophet of God that his writings are recorded in God's Holy Word.

Moses was afraid to go back to the Children of Israel because he did not think they would listen to him. But God gave him authority. God told him to tell the people that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent him. The Jewish people, even to the time of Christ, honored their father Abraham very highly; so if the God of Abraham was speaking to them, they should listen.

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.

God told Moses everything he should say to the people, and so He does to all His true ministers. The Spirit of God teaches every one the same thing, and we are safe in following the true man of God.

Pharaoh's Refusal

Moses was instructed of God to gather all the religious leaders from among the Hebrews, and go with them to Pharaoh and ask permission to go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices unto God. This was not the same Pharaoh who had wanted to punish Moses for killing the Egyptian.

The Egyptians did not worship the true God. They had many gods, some of whom were supposed to live in animals. When the Jews offered a sacrifice of a heifer, for instance, it was sacrilege to the Egyptians because they believed that one of their gods sometimes came to earth and dwelled in a cow. Therefore, the Israelites had a good reason for wanting to go into the wilderness where the Egyptians could not see them make their offerings to God. Later, when we study the plagues that came upon Egypt, we shall learn more about the gods they worshiped.

God knew Pharaoh would not grant the permission Moses and the elders desired, but He told Moses that after many judgments had come upon the land, the Hebrews would be brought out, and would carry with them much of the riches of the Egyptians which would be freely given to them.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What was Moses' occupation at this time?
- 2 By what three names was this mountain called to which Moses came?
- 3 What was Moses' answer to the call of the Lord at the burning bush?
- 4 What was the big task to which the Lord called Moses?
 - 5 Did the Lord promise to be with him?