

“Moses and the Great I am” Exodus 3 FBC Canton Sunday am August 2, 2026

Introduction: God prepares us for our purpose. V. 1

God prepared Moses;

1. Before he was born...a beautiful child.
2. In the ark of the Nile to the home of the king.
 - a. Educated falsely, to choose the right.
3. In the failure of leadership, not waiting for God' timing to elevate him but literally taking the matter into his own hands, seeking his own methods to lead.
4. Fleeing to an unknown land to learn humility...the flock was not even his...and stewardship of the flock...do a good job because it does not belong to you.
5. 40 years of silence from the Lord.

40 is the time frame for testing in scripture. Acts 7

40 years of deciding whether or not he would choose the ways of Egypt.

40 years of leading flocks that don't belong to you. dependence upon God alone to provide.

40 years of applying the lessons learned during the first 80.

Now he will learn you cannot get away from the Lord, even in the back side of the desert of your life.

God never loses his children or abdicates their purpose.

Today I am praying for you to be transformed for your purpose for which God has prepared you.

I. God appears to us to set others free. V. 2-9, Exodus 2: 24-25

²³ Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*.

a. Burning Bush is picture of sin being judged. V. 3

b. God initiates, Moses must investigate. V. 4

a. God calls by name.

- i. The Angel of the Lord is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus.

1. The great I am.

b. God calls to holiness. V. 5

- i. No shoes, means no standing for holiness without God.

c. God's presence produces fear of the Lord. V. 6

- i. He announces himself as the God of Moses family.

d. God has 7 purposes. V. 7-9

i. God sees.

- 1. He has seen oppression.
- 2. You are seen by the Lord.

ii. God hears.

- 1. He's heard their cries.
- 2. What you cry out about...God knows every tear.

iii. God knows.

- 1. He knows their sorrows.
- 2. He is familiar with sorrow and acquainted with grief.

iv. God delivers.

- 1. He's come down to deliver them.
 - a. (on purpose to redeem them),

v. God removes wicked.

- 1. Out of the hand of the Egyptians.
- 2. We have a moral obligation to call out evil.

vi. God gives goodness.

- 1. Into good land. Removing 6 pagan tribes.
- 2. (He will take them on resurrection ground which is separate from the conquest of the land),

vii. God flows blessings.

- 1. A land flowing with milk and honey. Chuck Missler

II. God sends us for the purpose of Exodus. V. 10-14

It took the blood to get Israel out of Egypt, it took 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel!

Leaving Egypt means being set free from the power of Egypt in our walk with the Lord.

Seeing bondage as a source of provision.

Going back to the old life

Complaining about leaders

Not believing God above human reasoning

a. Who is sending you is more important than who is opposing you. v. 11

**GREATER IS
HE
THAT IS IN YOU,
THAN HE
THAT IS IN THE WORLD.**
1 JOHN 4:4

b. The one who sends makes and keeps his promises. V. 12

a. Back on this mountain: Jabal El-Laws.







c. "I am"=Eternal. V. 14, John 8:57-59

57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." 59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Conclusion: God appears to transform us for his purpose.

Don't give God excuses...Moses did.

Expect difficulty...Moses had difficulty.

Expect to see God in ways no one else will...Moses did

Expect to see miracles done by God that no one else will...Moses did.

Expect your work to impact future generations...Moses did.

Exodus 3 Chuck Missler

Review

There is a lot of evidence to indicate that Moses' parents were operating by special revelation (Acts 7). By faith, they put him in the water (faith comes by hearing). They were following instructions. One gets the idea that Moses had a sense of being a deliverer, he was just premature when he took up arms against the Egyptian earlier which led to his exile.

It is also worth recognizing that Moses had spent a substantial period of time (some evidence that supports the theory that he was at the age of 40 when he exiled himself from Egypt). He was schooled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7 where Steven gives us insight into these familiar Old Testament stories which are actually not in the Old Testament).

We know from Josephus that Moses was in effect adopted by Pharaoh's daughter who had no other offspring and therefore he was heir to the throne of Egypt.

Moses was 40 when he went to the backside of the desert (East side) to Midian, where he was for some 40 years. (John the Baptist was in the desert, Paul was in Arabia... The Scripture is very silent on those periods, just like it is silent about Moses' period in Midian.) God does not seem to be in a hurry. We need to be patient (1 Cor 1:18-29).

It is also interesting to watch Pharaoh, who tried desperately to cleanse the Hebrews from any uprising, ended up housing, schooling and empowering the very man who would rise up against him. God specifically sets up Pharaoh to be stubborn, and to give God the opportunity to show His power and strength. Pharaoh's resistance is predicted in advance.

The 10 plagues we will see were the hierarchy of the things which the Egyptians worshiped.

The Burning Bush

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. Note that Moses was rejected before he saw the burning bush.

Traditionally, "Horeb" is regarded as the range, Mount Sinai as the specific peak within that range (Ex 24:12, 13). Recent discoveries, however, place the mount in Arabia (Gal 4:25). This same location is used with Elijah (1 Kgs 19:4-11) and a tradition among many scholars that it was at Mount Sinai where Paul was given the gospel. Paul was schooled separately (Gal 1:17; 4:25) some scholars infer that he may have been in exile himself and received revelation in that area. Note Gen 46:34.

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.

Moses is familiar with the area, a bush on fire would not be too

unusual in the desert. But this bush was burning and burning and not being consumed.

Bush - only one other passage, Deut 33:16. “Dwelt” in the bush, the abode of Him who dwelt in the bush, “dwelt” = *shah-chan*, from which we get the word for “Shekinah,” the Shekinah Glory.

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.

Angel of the Lord according to verse 2, yet here the voice is attributed to God.

Visions from God are not unusual for those great men of God: Isa 6 for Isaiah; Acts 9:3 for Paul; Mt 17 for the inside disciples; Rev 4 & 5 for us, but through the eyes of John; Dan 7—all examples of being confronted with the Glory of God relevant to understanding His glory prior to being called to service. A very interesting pattern in the Scripture.

From their midst, God reveals Himself.

Symbolism in the Burning Bush

The Burning Bush has some very interesting symbolism. Fire is always symbolic of judgment (in the Scripture); brass was always used in the Tabernacle for vessels which needed to hold fire, so brass speaks of fire and thus judgment. (Num 21:5-20 and the brazen serpent). Heb 12:29 “our God is a consuming fire”; Heb 1:13 notes that He cannot even look upon evil.

So with fire speaking of judgment, what is being judged here?

The bush. The Hebrew for bush is *hn,s]* (*seneh*), which actually comes from the word “to prick” and it thus means a bramble or thorn bush (sometimes called an acacia bush); the thorn bush of the desert.

The symbol for sin is a thorn; see Gen 3:18. When we see Christ crucified, we find the Roman soldiers made a crown of thorns and placed it upon Christ’s head. Christ was made sin for us (Gal 3:13), He bore our sins on His brow.

Here with the burning bush, we have sin being judged by God’s consuming fire! The thorn bush is not consumed; sin in the Hands of the Living God, not being destroyed, is a model of mercy. Do not get Grace and Mercy confused. Grace is getting something that you don’t deserve. Mercy is not getting that which we do deserve.

Christ became “a root out of dry ground”; Isa 53 (also see Psalm 22).

Also, it is interesting that here we see thorns and not fruit.

Fiery Furnace— Type of Tribulation

This image of the burning bush is prophetic (or as some would say, dispensational). Fire has another similar idiom in the Scripture; see Deut 4:20. The idiom for Egypt from this passage is “an iron furnace” speaking of their affliction, their bondage to the Egyptians, spiritually their bondage to sin. The fiery furnace is not only an idiom of judgement, it is also an idiom of tribulation. There are at least three models of Israel in the Tribulation in terms of the Fiery Furnace: this is one; i.e., Israel in Egypt as exemplified by this passage in Deuteronomy. Another one from Daniel 3; Daniel’s friends in the fiery furnace. The fiery furnace is a type of tribulation, and Daniel’s friends are a type of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar is a type of the antichrist. Where was Daniel? Historically, Daniel was probably off on affairs of state; but typologically, it is interesting that Daniel is a model of the faithful—and one can identify him with the church—and he is absent from this tribulation scene.

Another case of the fiery furnace, many prophecies of Israel speak of the Tribulation as a fiery furnace, do not get these mixed up with the fiery furnace in Revelation. The concept of the furnace as a tribulation time for Israel is used in Egypt, typified by the passage in Daniel 3, and also something yet future. (Isa 63:9)

Shoes

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.

“Put off thy shoes” - study shoes and their significance throughout Scripture. Is there a consistency of idiom with which the Holy Spirit uses to convey meaning?

Shoes are mentioned in the wilderness, when the nation Israel was wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, their shoes (of porpoise or badger skins) never wear out!

Shoes represent walk or service. We take off our shoes when we are in His presence because we are on Holy ground; our service can mean nothing before His Throne. However, He miraculously preserves the walk of Israel through the wilderness.

In Ruth, Naomi (type of Israel) brings back her gentile daughter-in-law Ruth from exile, and the love story occurs where Ruth encounters a kinsman by the name of Boaz. Boaz is called upon to do the kinsman’s part, which involves two kinds of redemption: one kind is to restore the land to Naomi; the second type is to take Ruth as a bride. This is also a detailed study with the way God’s law operated in Israel in regards to land ownership; this is a fundamental study to understand the title deed of the earth as seen in Revelation where a kinsman is needed to redeem. Boaz

is a type of our kinsman, Jesus Christ, redeeming the land back to Israel and taking a gentile bride. The symbol of this transaction is the shoe (Ruth 4)!

[For a complete study see our briefing package, *The Romance of Redemption*, or our commentary on *Ruth* included with the study of *Esther*.]

It is also interesting to see John the Baptist, the one who is least in the kingdom of Heaven by his own admission. He described the deity of Jesus Christ as one whose shoes he is unworthy to unloosen.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

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.

God of Abraham = sovereignty, chosen.

Isaac = power, new birth, quicken.

Jacob = patience (justifies, perfect us).

Notice how many times in this chapter that God speaks in threes.

The “I am that I am” is actually a three-fold declaration. Hint of the Trinity...

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;

A picture of the slavery to sin, captive of Satan.

Theophanies (Mal 3:1; et al.). Three examples: Gen 16:13; 21:17; and Ex 3.

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.

This last part will be Joshua’s task.

This can be broken into 7 parts:

- 1) He has seen,
- 2) He’s heard,
- 3) He knows their sorrows,
- 4) He’s come down to deliver them, (on purpose to redeem them),
- 5) Out of the Hand of the Egyptians,
- 6) Into good land, (He will take them on resurrection ground which is separate from the conquest of the land),
- 7) Flowing with Milk and Honey.

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.

“Now” - not tomorrow. (Vs. 40 years earlier for Moses). Acts

7:25; Ex 2:11.

Note: not divine, cosmic event (angels, etc.) Human agency appointed.

God called Moses, He makes no mistakes.

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?

“I Am that I Am”

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.

Now that is to be developed as a paradigm of the verb “I was, I am, and I always will continue to be.” The three-fold development of the verb “to be.” Also called the “tetragammeton” and there is a lot of scholastic dispute as to how to pronounce it.

The Hebrews have done a wonderful job in preserving the texts.

Each Hebrew letter has a numerical value, and when they were copying the text, they would add up the sum of each page making sure it matched the original. It is due to their precision that we see very little differences in the older manuscripts and those found in Qumran although there were so many years between them!

[See our briefing packages on the Bible manuscripts called *The Bible: An Extraterrestrial Message* and *How We Got Our Bible*.]

The Hebrews were entrusted with the name of God, the I AM.

They revered that name so highly that they refused to pronounce it. They put the tetragammeton in the text instead and over the centuries have forgotten how to pronounce it! The irony is that we are not sure how to pronounce it because they revered it so **21** highly that they felt it was unpronounceable (they were not worthy to pronounce it), and through those traditions, have lost it. Fortunately, we have Him by a new Name, Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of John is organized around the 7 “I Am” statements of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John is 7 incidences which give rise to 7 miracles, which give rise to 7 discourses, and each of those discourses has an “I Am” statement in the middle. “I Am

the Bread of Life”; “I Am the Way the Truth and the Light”; “I Am the Living Water”; “I Am the Resurrection and the Life”; “I Am the Light of the World”; “I Am the True Vine”; “I Am the Good Shepherd.” [See our expositional commentary on the *Gospel of John* for a complete study.]

See John 8:19. Jesus always met sinners with compassion and forgiveness, except for one group which He used harsh language toward, the professional religionists of the day. Religion in the sense that Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves as opposed to adopting the covering that God had provided. See verse 56-58, Jesus is saying that He was the voice in the burning bush. Notice verse 59, where they took up stones to kill him according to the law against blasphemy. Jesus Christ in John 8 claimed not only to be God, but to be the voice of the burning bush.

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:

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.

Six tribes mentioned here because typologically they represent man. When we get to Joshua and they go into the land, seven tribes are named. Joshua is a model of the book of Revelation and the listing of the tribes even exemplify the conformance of that idea in the Scripture. [See our study of these books in their respective expositional commentary sets, *Joshua* and *Revelation*.]

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The Book of Exodus

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Notice that the language of God allows no contingencies! No “ifs,” “maybes,” “buts,” or “perhaps.”

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.

They are to travel three days into the wilderness. Why three days? Because that is the interval between death and resurrection.

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:

Egypt gave them gifts to leave!

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.

Exodus 4

The Rod and the Serpent

1] And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

2] And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. We will see here, three signs. The first time a sign is introduced in Scripture is worth your study.

“Rod”

David Guzik Study Guide for Exodus 3

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

A. God's call to Moses from the burning bush.

1. ([Exodus 3:1-3](#)) Moses and the burning bush on Mount Horeb.

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

a. **Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law**: For 40 years Moses lived as an obscure shepherd in the desert of Midian. At this point his life was so humble that he didn't even have a flock of sheep to call his own — the sheep belonged to his **father-in-law**.

i. **Tending the flock**: “The Hebrew suggests that this was his habitual occupation.” (Cole)

b. **The back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God**: Moses brought the sheep to this mountain, also later called Mount Sinai. **Horeb** probably means “desert” or “desolation,” and the name gives an idea of the terrain.

c. **The bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed**: It wasn't just that Moses saw a bush burning; apparently, it is not uncommon for a plant like this to spontaneously ignite out in that desert. Nevertheless, two things were distinctive about that bush:

- **The Angel of the LORD appeared... from the midst** of the bush.
- Though the bush burned, **the bush was not consumed**.

i. "Though the bush burned with fire, it did not crackle or diminish, no leaf curled and no branch charred. It burned, but was not consumed." (Meyer)

ii. The bush burning but not being consumed was a magnetic sight to Moses — it drew him in for a closer examination. Some think the burning bush to be a symbol of Israel, or the people of God more generally — afflicted but not destroyed, because God is in the midst of them.

iii. Yet we can also say that the burning bush was a picture of the cross. The Hebrew word used to describe this bush is comes from the word "to stick or to prick," this meaning a thorn-bush or bramble. We can think of the cross — where Jesus, crowned with thorns, endured the fires of judgment and yet was not consumed by them — and be reminded of the cross when we consider the burning bush.

iv. **I will now turn aside to see this great sight**: Whatever exactly Moses saw, it was nothing *normal*. "To explain what happened here as a temporary mirage of reflected sunlight on some red leaves or a campfire of some Bedouin or even the phenomenon of Saint Elmo's fire is to substitute *our* experience for Moses' forty years in that area and his estimate that it was indeed unusual." (Kaiser)

v. Clarke on the **Angel of the LORD**: "Not a created angel certainly, for he is called *Jehovah*, [Exodus 3:4](#) and has the most expressive attributes of the Godhead applied to him... Yet he is an *angel*, *malach*, a *messenger*, in whom was the name of God... And who is this but JESUS, the Leader, Redeemer, and Saviour of all mankind?"

2. ([Exodus 3:4-6](#)) From the burning bush, God calls to Moses.

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

- a. **When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look**: God didn't speak to Moses until He had Moses' attention. Often God's Word doesn't touch our heart the way that it might because we don't give it our attention.

i. The burning bush was a spectacular phenomenon that captured Moses' attention; but it changed nothing until Moses received the Word of God that came to him there.

b. **God called to him from the midst of the bush**: Moses didn't see anyone in the burning bush; yet God, in the presence of the Angel of the LORD (Exodus 3:2) was there, calling out to Moses from the midst of the burning bush.

i. Undoubtedly, this is another occasion where Jesus appeared before His incarnation in the Old Testament as the Angel of the LORD, as He did many times (Genesis 16:7-13, Judges 2:1-5, Judges 6:11-24, Judges 13:3-22).

ii. We say this is God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, because of God the Father, it is said No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1:18), and that no man has ever seen God in the Person of the Father (1 Timothy 6:16).

c. **Moses, Moses**: God's first words to Moses called him by name. This shows that even though Moses was now an obscure, forgotten shepherd on the backside of the desert, God knew who he was, and Moses was important to God.

i. The double call (**Moses, Moses!**) implied importance and urgency, as when God called Abraham, Abraham! (Genesis 22:11), Samuel, Samuel! (1 Samuel 3:10), Simon, Simon (Luke 22:31), Martha, Martha (Luke 10:41), and Saul, Saul (Acts 9:4).

d. **Then He said**: God told Moses to do two things to show special honor to this place because of the immediate presence of God.

- He told Moses to keep a distance (**Do not draw near this place**).
- He commanded Moses to show reverence for God's presence (**Take your sandals off your feet**).

i. **Do not draw near** literally has the sense of "stop coming closer." Moses was on his way for an up-close examination of the burning bush when God stopped him short.

ii. This was a holy place; and because God is holy, there will always be a distance between God and man. Even in perfection man will never be equal to God, though we will be able to have closer fellowship with Him than ever.

iii. **Take your sandals off your feet**: Removing the sandals showed an appropriate humility, because the poorest and most needy have no shoes, and servants usually went barefoot. It also recognized the immediate presence of God. In many cultures, you take off your shoes when you come into someone's house, and now Moses was in God's "house," a place of His immediate presence.

iv. "As this sole must let in dust, gravel, and sand about the foot when travelling, and render it very uneasy, hence the custom of frequently washing the feet in those countries where these sandals were worn. Pulling off the shoes was, therefore, an emblem of laying aside the pollutions contracted by walking in the way of sin." (Clarke)

e. **The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**: God revealed Himself to Moses by declaring His relationship to the patriarchs. This reminded Moses that God is the God of the covenant, and His covenant with Israel was still valid and important. This wasn't a "new God" meeting Moses, but the same God that dealt with **Abraham**, **Isaac**, and **Jacob**.

i. God would reveal Himself to Moses more intimately than He had to any of the patriarchs; yet it all began with God reminding Moses of the bridge of covenant they met on.

ii. Some in the days of Moses might have thought that God neglected or forgot His covenant in the 400 years of Israel's slavery in Egypt, since the time of the patriarchs. Nevertheless, God was at work during that time, preserving and multiplying the nation.

f. **Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God**: God told Moses to do what was appropriate for a creature before their Creator — to revere and recognize His holiness. Moses responded as a man who knew he was not only a creature, but also a sinful creature — he **hid his face**.

i. In his years in the wilderness of Midan, Moses must have often remembered how he murdered an Egyptian and how proud he was to think he could deliver Israel himself. Moses might have remembered a thousand sins, both real and imagined — now, when God appeared, he responded in a way completely different than he might have 40 years before.

B. God's commission to Moses.

1. (**Exodus 3:7-10**) God explains His general plan to Moses, and Moses' place in the plan.

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

a. **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**: God did not just **then** decide to give Israel the land of Canaan. It was the same land that He promised to the patriarchs some 400 years previous to this.

b. **I have surely seen the oppression of My people who **are** in Egypt, and have heard their cry**: God wanted Moses and Israel to know His compassionate care for them.

i. To this point, Moses' experience emphasized the **separation** between himself and God. Moses could never burn without being consumed. Moses could not speak from the midst of a fire. Moses couldn't keep his sandals on in the divine presence. Moses was not the eternal God of the patriarchs. The separation between God and Moses was real; yet God would soon show His care and compassion to Moses and the people of Israel. God is **separate**, but not necessarily **distant**. God is separate; yet God cares and connects Himself to our needs.

c. **I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people**: In **Exodus 3:8** God said, **I have come down to deliver them**. Then at **Exodus 3:10** God said, **come now, therefore, and I will send you**. If God said He would deliver them, why did He use or need Moses at all? This shows that God often uses and chooses to rely on human instruments.

i. God could do it all by Himself, but it is most often God's plan to work with and through people, as we are **workers together with Him** (**2 Corinthians 6:1**).

2. (**Exodus 3:11-12**) Moses' answer, and God's reply to that answer.

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?" 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."**

a. **Who am I**: 40 years before, Moses thought he knew who he was: he was a prince of Egypt and a Hebrew, God's chosen instrument to deliver Israel. After forty years of chasing sheep around the desert, Moses didn't have the same self-sure confidence that he once had.

b. **I will certainly be with you**: God's reply is intended to take Moses' focus off of himself and on where it **should be** — on God. Therefore, God never answered the question "**Who am I?**" Instead, He reminded Moses "**I will certainly be with you**."

i. This was a great opportunity to deal with Moses' "self-esteem" problem, but God ignored the solutions we usually use regarding this "problem." Moses only had a self-esteem problem when he was too confident in his own ability to deliver Israel.

ii. **Who am I**: This really wasn't the right question; "**Who is God?**" was the proper question. God's identity was more important than who Moses was. When we know the God who is with us, we can step forth confidently to do His will.

iii. **I will certainly be with you**: After this, Moses had no right to protest further. From here his objections move from a godly lack of self-reliance to an ungodly lack of faith.

c. **When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain**: As Moses tended his flock in the wilderness, it probably seemed totally unlikely that he would lead all three million of his people to this same **mountain** — but God promised that this would be so.

i. The **sign** that God had truly sent Moses may not have been the coming to Mount Sinai (which did not happen for many, many months). The sign probably refers backwards, to the sign of the burning bush and the encounter with God there.

3. ([Exodus 3:13-14](#)) The revelation of God's name to Moses.

Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, **when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What **is** His name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

a. **And they say to me, “What is His name?” what shall I say to them:** Rightfully, Moses sensed he needed credentials before the people of Israel. Before, he thought he had the credentials because he was a prince of Egypt. 40 years of tending sheep took away his sense of self-reliance.

i. When God revealed Himself to man in the days of the patriarchs it was often associated with a newly revealed name or title for God.

- Abraham, in the encounter with Melchizedek called on **God Most High** ([Genesis 14:22](#)).
- Abraham later encountered **Almighty God** ([Genesis 17:1](#)).
- Abraham came to know the LORD as **Everlasting God** ([Genesis 21:33](#)), and **The-LORD-Will-Provide** ([Genesis 22:14](#)).
- Hagar encountered **You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees** ([Genesis 16:13](#)).
- Jacob met **El Elohe Israel** ([Genesis 33:20](#)) and **El Bethel** ([Genesis 35:7](#)).

ii. So if Moses were to come to the elders of Israel as a representative of God, it would be logical for them to wonder, “By what name did He reveal Himself to you?”

b. **And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”:** It might seem nonsensical to refer to one's self with the phrase, **“I AM WHO I AM.”** Yet it reveals something important about God — that He has no equal.

i. “There is no equivalent for God but God. If you place God on the one side of your symbol of equation (=), there is nothing to put on the other but Himself.” (Meyer)

ii. The **closest** we come to an equivalent is to say, “God is love” ([1 John 4:8](#), [4:16](#)). Yet that is not exactly an equivalent, because you can't turn it around and say, “Love is God.” God is love, but He is also greater than love.

iii. This name **I AM WHO I AM** is connected with the name **Yahweh**. “This pithy clause is clearly a reference to the name YHWH. Probably ‘Yahweh’ is regarded as a shortening of the whole phrase, and a running together of the clause into one word.” (Cole)

iv. **Yahweh** was not a new name, nor an unknown name — it appears more than 160 times in the book of Genesis. Moses' mother's name was **Jochabed** meaning **Yahweh is my glory**.

Moses and Israel knew the name Yahweh. God did not give Moses a previously unknown name of God, but the name they had known before. God called them back to the faith of the patriarchs, not to something “new.”

v. In the English-speaking world, for a time people pronounced Yahweh as Jehovah. The pious Jews of later years did not want to pronounce the name of God out of reverence, so they left the vowels out of His name and simply said the word Lord (adonai) instead. If the vowels of the word adonai are put over the consonants for YHWH, you can get the name “Jehovah.” All this came about much later; in the days of the Bible, the name was pronounced Yah-weh or Yah-veh.

c. **I AM has sent me to you**: God told Moses His name was **I AM** because God simply is; there was never a time when He did not exist, or a time when He will cease to exist.

- i. The name **I AM** has within it the idea that God is completely independent; that He relies on nothing for life or existence (Isaiah 40:28-29; John 5:26). Theologians sometimes call this quality aseity. It means that God doesn’t need anybody or anything — life is in Himself.
- ii. It is also connected with the idea that God is eternal and unchanging. “Strictly speaking, there is no past or future tense in the Divine Vocabulary. When God appears to employ them, it is by way of accommodation to our limited horizons.” (Meyer)
- iii. Also inherent in the idea behind the name **I AM** is the sense that God is “the becoming one”; God becomes whatever is lacking in our time of need. The name **I AM** invites us to fill in the blank to meet our need — when we are in darkness, Jesus says I am the light; when we are hungry, He says I am the bread of life, when we are defenseless, He says I am the Good Shepherd. God is the becoming one, becoming what we need.
- iv. In this, God’s name is both an announcement and an introduction. It announces God’s presence, and invites any interested to know Him by experience, to taste and see that the LORD is good.

d. **I AM**: This is a divine title that Jesus took upon Himself often, clearly identifying Himself with the voice from the burning bush.

- i. *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that **I AM** [He], you will die in your sins.* (John 8:24)
- ii. *Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I AM** [He], and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.”* (John 8:28)
- iii. *Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I AM**.”* (John 8:58)
- iv. *Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that **I AM**.* (John 13:19)

v. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I AM [He]." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "I AM [He]," they drew back and fell to the ground.* ([John 18:4-6](#))

The Bible Says Exodus 3:1-6 Meaning

Chapter 3 begins with [Now](#), which introduces a new section of the book. In this section (chapters 3 and 4), God confronts Moses and appoints him to be the deliverer of Israel. [\[\]](#)

By the time the chapter starts, *Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian* and had been doing so for about 40 years ([Acts 7:30](#)). This would make Moses about 80 years old by this time. On this occasion, he *led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb*. It seems that Moses led the flock farther from his base camp than normal. Perhaps he thought that grazing was better there, or it could be that the climate was more agreeable at that time of year.

"Horeb" ("desolate place") is another name for Mount Sinai. Scholars disagree as to its exact location. The traditional location is on the southern side of the Sinai Peninsula, but others place it somewhere on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba in what is now northwest Saudi Arabia ([Galatians 4:25](#)). To call Horeb *the mountain of God* is with an eye to the future, for that is what it will be in the not-to-distant future.

It was here, at Horeb, that *The angel of the Lord appeared to him*. The phrase "angel of the Lord" occurs several times in Genesis ([Genesis 16:7](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [21:17](#), [22:11](#), [15](#), [24:7](#), [40](#), [31:11](#), [48:16](#)). The word "angel" means "messenger", and it often refers to a spiritual being that serves God. But it also can refer to the LORD, meaning that this could be interpreted to mean that the LORD Himself, the second person of the Trinity in His pre-incarnate state, appeared to Moses. This is called a "theophany", and there are other instances of theophany in the Old Testament (for example, [Joshua 5:13](#)).

The LORD appears to Moses *in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush*. The word "in" is probably better translated "as", yielding "as a blazing fire." The LORD's presence appears as fire in several places in Exodus — here and a pillar of fire (the LORD is Israel's guide, [Exodus 13:21](#)).

When *he looked* at the burning bush, he noticed something strange, that *behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed*. In a dry climate such as the wilderness, burning vegetation is not unusual. But a bush that is burning and not turned to ashes is certainly weird. It

violates the rules of nature. Notice also that it is the bush that is burning — later, the whole mountain will appear to be burning because of the LORD's presence in fire ([Exodus 19:18](#)).

In verse 3, in an effort to satisfy his curiosity, [Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."](#) This amazing sight was too much for Moses to ignore, so [When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look](#), He confronted him. Notice that the name for the "Lord" (Yahweh) is used here and then it changes to [God](#) (Elohim) in the rest of the verse.

The conversation begins when [God called to him from the midst of the burning bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"](#) This repetition is designed to get Moses' undivided attention and to emphasize the significance of this moment. Moses is not the first person to which this has happened. The LORD did the same to Abraham ([Genesis 22:11](#) — to prevent him from sacrificing his son Isaac) and Jacob ([Genesis 46:2](#) — to command him to go to Egypt). Here, using the same formula, the LORD commanded Moses to go down to Egypt. The doubling of the name also appears in the New Testament in [Luke 10:41](#) ("Martha, Martha"), [Luke 22:31](#) ("Simon, Simon"), and [Acts 9:4](#) ("Saul, Saul").

Moses even responded to the LORD in a way identical to Abraham ([Genesis 22:11](#)) and Jacob ([Genesis 46:2](#)) when [he said, "Here I am."](#)

Moses was approaching the burning bush, where the presence of God resided, and God [said, "Do not come near here."](#) It is obvious that he could not draw near to God in his present condition. There was something Moses had to do — [remove your sandals from your feet](#). In the Ancient Near East, taking off one's shoes was a sign of humility and reverence. It was also symbolic of removing the unclean things of the world. Being a shepherd, Moses' shoes were probably filthy, and Moses had to learn that such uncleanness was unacceptable in the very presence of the holy God.

The LORD also gave him the reason for removing his shoes — [the place on which you are standing is holy ground.](#) The word "holy" speaks of that which is "set apart" or "special." What made this piece of land special is God's presence. It will be even more special when the people of Israel come here after their liberation from Egypt and enter into a covenant relationship with their Deliverer. This becomes a pattern throughout the rest of the Bible — one must be clean before coming into the presence of the holy God.

In verse 6, the LORD continues his conversation with Moses. Here, He tells Moses that ["I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."](#) Notice the repetition of the word "God" with each patriarch. This is to reinforce the idea that the God currently talking to Moses is the God who made a covenant with them, and now he will continue His covenant activities with Moses.

Notice also the use of "I am." This is a prelude to what God says in verse 14 about His name. In this regard, it is interesting that Jesus uses this passage as evidence of resurrection. [Mark 12:24-27](#) records His debate with the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead). Jesus quotes [Exodus 3:6](#) and points out the use of the present tense "I am" to prove that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living. Otherwise, this verse should have used the past tense "I was."

After hearing the LORD's words in verse 6, Moses' curiosity turned to fear when he realized that he was in God's presence. So *Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

Chuck Smith

Sermon Notes for Exodus 3:1-12

"WHO AM I"

Intro: God's watchful care over His people, "I have seen, etc."

I. WHEN DID HE ASK THE QUESTION?

A. After forty years of herding sheep in the desert regions of Median.

B. Forty years earlier he would not have asked the question, "Who am I?"

1. He was the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

2. He was trained for the throne.

3. He was conscious of God's call on his life.

a. He figured God had placed him in this unique position for this reason.

b. He thought all the Israelites would know this also.

c. When forty years earlier he was asked "who made you to be ruler over us?" He was shocked, [Acts 7](#).

C. After God had called him again to lead the people out of bondage.

1. He had started to do this forty years ago without success.

a. He did not succeed in burying on Egyptian.

b. God was wanting to bury the whole army.

2. Moses' call was right, his timing was off.

a. He was forty years too soon.

b. God not only calls to a task, but will tell when.

3. Moses sought in the energy of the flesh to fulfill a purpose of God.

a. Sought with carnal weapons to fight a spiritual battle.

b. God does not call us to a task and then say "have at it," but he also seeks to equip us for the task.

D. His question revealed that the second phase of his preparation was completed.

1. He had spent his first forty years in the schools of Egypt training to be something.

2. His next forty years were to be spent in the isolation of the desert learning he was nothing, "Who am I?"

3. His next forty years were to be spent in learning how God could take nothing and make of it the greatest human leader in history.

II. THE ANSWER OF THE QUESTION REALLY DOESN'T MATTER.

A. We all have a personal estimation of ourselves.

1. Sometimes they are exalted.

2. Sometimes very low self-estimate.

a. Tried & failed so often.

B. Who I am doesn't count, it is who God is that matters.

1. God said "Certainly, I will be with you."

2. It is not a matter of my strength, my qualifications, my wisdom, my abilities.

3. God was just seeking an instrument through which He might do His work.

C. God is sufficient for any task He has called you to perform.

III. THE QUESTION FOLLOWED THE REVELATION OF GOD - WHAT HE WAS DOING.

A. I am the God of thy Father...I have surely seen...I have heard their cry...I know their sorrow... I have come down to deliver.

1. God's true revelation always reveals our moral imperfections.

a. Isa. "I am a man of unclean lips."

b. Dan. "My comeliness was turned onto corruption."

c. Job "Behold I am of small account."

d. Peter "I am a sinful man."

e. Paul "The chiefest of sinners."

These are the men through whom God worked to magnify His grace.

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Matthew Henry Commentary on Exodus 3

Chapter 3

As prophecy had ceased for many ages before the coming of Christ, that the revival and perfection of it in that great prophet might be the more remarkable, so vision had ceased (for aught that appears) among the patriarchs for some ages before the coming of Moses, that God's appearances to him for Israel's salvation might be the more welcome; and in this chapter we have God's first appearance to him in the bush and the conference between God and Moses in that vision. Here is,

- I. The discovery God was pleased to make of his glory to Moses at the bush, to which Moses was forbidden to approach too near ([v. 1-5](#)).
- II. A general declaration of God's grace and good-will to his people, who were beloved for their fathers' sakes ([v. 6](#)).
- III. A particular notification of God's purpose concerning the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt.
 - 1. He assures Moses it should now be done ([v. 7-9](#)).
 - 2. He gives him a commission to act in it as his ambassador both to Pharaoh ([v. 10](#)) and to Israel ([v. 16](#)).
 - 3. He answers the objection Moses made of his own unworthiness ([v. 11, 12](#)).
 - 4. He gives him full instructions what to say both to Pharaoh and to Israel ([v. 13-18](#)).
 - 5. He tells him beforehand what the issue would be ([v. 19, etc.](#)).

