

## THE BURNING BUSH

Moses - Part 3

Exodus 3:1-10

**Intro:** Moses is clearly one of the most important men in all of the Bible.

He not only led the children of Israel out of Egypt, which was one of the most amazing events in all of history, but he was the leader of the people of God during the days when they became a nation. Four books of the Bible deal with the life and ministry of Moses, a fact which by itself indicates how important he was. His name appears 848 times in the Bible.

Moses lived to be one hundred and twenty years old. We are told this in Deuteronomy, chapter 34, verse 7:

7 And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

This means that he was excellent health when he died. The Lord Himself buried Moses, and to this day no one knows where he was buried. If the Jews had ever found the place, they undoubtedly would have built a shrine there, and very likely not only worshiped there, but worshiped him. So to avoid anything like that, the Lord has kept his burial place a secret. We do know that Moses appeared with our Lord and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration during our Lord's ministry on earth.

We are indebted to Stephen in the New Testament for a few details about the life of Moses that are not given to us in the OT. Stephen mentioned in his message which is recorded for us in Acts 7, that the life of Moses was divided into three parts of forty years each. The first forty years were from the time of his birth until he had to leave Egypt after he killed an Egyptian who was abusing one of the Hebrews. Moses was in exile down in the land of Midian until the Lord appeared to him at the burning bush, the story we are considering this morning. The Lord called Moses to go back to Egypt, where he led the people out of Egypt, but Moses did not lead the people into the promised land because he had disobeyed the Lord by striking a huge rock twice to get water when the Lord had told him just to speak to it. So Moses died before the people went into the land of Canaan, and at that time he was 120 years old.

Taking these divisions in Moses like back to our study of the book of Exodus where the history of Moses life begins, we can say this:

1) In Exodus 2:1-10 we have all that is recorded of the first forty years of

Moses' life. See Acts 7:23.

2) In Exodus 2:11-22 we have his years of exile in Midian, which was the second forty years.

3) In Exodus 3:1 and continuing on to the end of the fifth book of the OT, Deuteronomy, we have the last forty years of Moses' life. Stephen expressed it in these words which are found in Acts 7:30-37:

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.

36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

This part of Stephen's message sounds like he had taken it right out of the book of Exodus 3, doesn't it? The last verse which I have read to you, verse 37, is taken from Deuteronomy 18:15, which says this:

15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken

Stephen referred to this latter verse to show that Moses was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course this is a major reason for saying that Moses has a very important place in Scripture. For Moses to have been a type of our Lord means that he foreshadowed the coming of the Lord, and that in many respects, not all, but in many respects *Moses was like our Lord Jesus Christ*. This alone makes the study of the life of Moses extremely important.

But now let us go to our text for the morning: Ex. 3:1-10. Remember that at this point Moses is eighty years old. He has spent forty years in exile. We don't know if he had any communication with Egypt at all at that time. I assume that he did not. Aaron and Miriam were still there, but it is likely that both Moses' father, Amram, and his mother, Jochobed, had died by this time. At least they are not mentioned again as being alive. What do you think his thoughts were as far as Egypt was concerned. It surely must have been that long before this he had given up any idea that the Lord still was planning to use him. After all, he had murdered that Egyptian, seeking to protect a Hebrew, but after such a terrible sin and mistake, the Lord would not have any place for him with the people of Israel.

But suddenly, while he was taking care of his father-in-law's sheep, an amazing thing happened:

### **I. THE BURNING BUSH (Ex. 3:1-3).**

Moses was down in the area of Mt. Sinai which was one of the peaks in the mountain range called Horeb. Doubtless he had been there many times before. But suddenly he saw a bush burning. That was not so unusual, but "out of the midst of the bush" "an angel of the Lord appeared to him. We don't know just when he noticed the angel of the Lord, but the thing that attracted him was the fact that the bush was not burned up! And so he went over to investigate. As he did that, a second amazing thing happened.

### **II. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD (Ex. 3:4-10).**

Now when you put verse 2 and verse 4 together, you can see immediately that "the angel of the Lord" was not just an angel after all, but it was the Lord Himself. Perhaps you remember that back in Genesis 16 we had this same kind of event take place with Hagar, Sarah's handmaid.

Now which Member of the Godhead was this? Well, the Apostle John, in John 1:18, tells us, "No man hath seen God at any time." But then he immediately added, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Now if we are told in the OT that this person or that *saw* God, then it must always mean that just as it was the Son Who revealed God in the NT, it must have always been the Son of God Who revealed God in the OT. So here in Exodus 3 I believe we can

say that Moses had a personal visit by the Son of God, our Lord! The same is true of Abraham when he was about to kill his son, Isaac. See Genesis 22. Now remember that the word “angel” basically means *a messenger*. So the fact that the Lord appeared as an angel, means that He came with a message from God. God waited for forty years before communicating with Moses after he killed the Egyptian.

The first words that Moses heard, were his name: “Moses, Moses.” Commentators seem reluctant to explain the doubling up of Moses’ name, just as they were reluctant to explain the double use of Abraham’s name in Genesis 22:17. But I think that we can see that a sense of urgency was being communicated to Abraham and to Moses. To Abraham, that he should not slay Isaac; to Moses, that he should listen carefully to every word that the Lord was about to speak to him. As far as we can tell from Scripture, Moses had never had a message from the Lord introduced in this way. Moses was to know beyond any doubt that the appearance of the angel of the Lord was for him, and for no one else. And after saying Moses’ name twice, the Lord evidently waited for Moses to respond to him. His answer meant that he was listening. “Here I am.” And then Moses heard words which I am sure that he never expected to hear.

The first words of the Lord in verses 5 and 6 had to do with the Lord Himself – first, about the Lord’s own holiness in verse 5; and second, in verse 6, about the Lord’s unchanging character.

Moses had moved toward God, but he was told not to come too close. In approaching God we must always be aware of how much greater than He is, and especially of His unapproachable holiness. Matthew Henry made this comment, speaking of Moses, but the same applies to us:

He must keep his distance; draw near, but not too near; so near as to hear, but not so near as to pry. His conscience must be satisfied, but not his curiosity; and care must be taken that familiarity does not breed contempt. Note, In all our approaches to God, we ought to be deeply affected with the infinite distance there is between us and God.

And then Matthew Henry reminded his readers of Ecclesiastes 5:2:

2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

This does not mean that we cannot pray long prayers, but it does mean that we should avoid careless and reckless talk when we come to the

Lord. Obviously the second forty years of Moses life had been years of learning, learning the truth about God, and learning the ways of God. He is credited in Scripture (Num. 12:3) by the Holy Spirit as being “very meek , above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” That meekness, which is always characterized by patience and even faith, shows that the Lord was fashioning his servant into a very useful instrument. Meekness and humility are what we might call twin words, even identical twins.

How important it is, in all the testings and trials or our lives, to remember the holiness of God and the immutability of God. We change, but He never does.

But then the Lord spoke in verse 7 of what He knew about His people, and the sufferings they were experiencing. As we learned at the end of chapter 2, He had heard their cries. This is a verse on the omniscience of God. His silence must never be interpreted by us as meaning that God is ignorant of our circumstances, or that He is not hearing our prayers.

In verses 8 and 9 we see what God intended to do about the trials of His people. These verses speak of His omnipotence. He said that He was coming down, meaning that He would be more obviously present with His people. He said that He was going to bring them out of Egypt, a task which neither Moses nor Aaron, nor the two of them together could do. Nor only that, but he was going to bring them across the desert and into the land which He had promises Abraham, and the Lord pledged Himself to do it in spite of the fact that at that very moment the land was occupied by six nations which the Lord mentioned to Moses: “the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” There was no uncertainty in what the Lord had to say, no ways in which His promises would be dependent upon Moses or Aaron or the people of Israel. God was pledging victory to Moses against all the powers that Israel would face, and concerning which Israel by herself would be powerless. Moses must have been overwhelmed as He listened to the Lord speak.

But in verse 10 we suddenly are made to realize, as Moses was, why the Lord had started all of this message by saying, “Moses, Moses.” The Lord talked to Moses as though the whole project would depend upon him. “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” Notice

here the Lord said, “I will send thee . . . that thou mayest bring forth My people . . . out of Egypt.” It sounded like the Lord was going to the sending, and that Moses would be the one who would bring the people out of their slavery. The Pharaoh who had originally sought to kill Moses, was dead, but how could Moses know that he was not still on the books of Egypt for execution?

It all had probably sounded very good to Moses until the Lord got to verse 10. Then Moses suddenly forgot all that the Lord had said before. I think that the Lord was talking to a man who was so defeated in his heart and soul that there was absolutely no possibility, humanly speaking, that he would respond to the call of the Lord to go back to Egypt to accept such a responsibility.

Next Sunday, the Lord willing, I want to deal with Moses’ response. But for today, let’s think about those second forty year in Moses’ life.

**Concl:** We are not told what Moses was waiting for during those years, or if he was really waiting for anything. So much is said of his faith in Hebrews 11 that I believe he must have been waiting for something to happen. He had taken himself out of Pharaoh’s family to identify himself with the Lord’s people. Anyone who would take a step like that had to believe that the Lord was going to do something for His people. They just couldn’t go on like they were in Egypt. So, if he was expecting something to happen, it must have made those forty years seem much longer than they actually were. It always seems as though the Lord always puts His people through a waiting period, or maybe several waiting periods during their lives.

We don’t know how long Noah had to wait before it rained, but it must have taken him many years to build the ark. And he ran the risk of people calling him a fool if it did not rain because up to his lifetime it had never rained on the earth.

Abraham waited for twenty-five years, and possibly a few more, before Isaac was born. In fact, he and Sarah waited until humanly speaking they were unable to have a child. They got so discouraged about it, that they had a son by Hagar while they were waiting for God to do something.

Joseph waited thirteen years before he was given a royal position in Egypt, but he had to wait nine more years before his brothers came down

to Egypt, and fell down on their faces before him, fulfilling the dream that Joseph had when he was just seventeen.

We don't know how long David actually waited before he became a king, but it was so long that he finally gave up and went down to live among the Philistines. One reason for the delay was Saul who pursued David until he did not think he would ever become the king. But then he did!

The children of Israel waited around 400 years before the Redeemer finally came who was predicted in the prophets.

None of us likes to wait. But the Lord evidently knows that a work needs to be done in our hearts which can only be done as we wait. The Lord waits, and He makes us wait. Today probably most of us are waiting for the Lord to answer some prayers that we have offered up to Him for years, or at least for weeks, or months.

Moses waited forty years before the Lord suddenly appeared to him in the burning bush. Waiting time seems to us to be wasted time, and it can be if we get our eyes off of the Lord. Let me give you some good verses on waiting for your encouragement, and for mine too, before we leave this place today.

One verse is in the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 30, verse 18. It says this:

18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Another good verse is Psalm 27:14:

14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait, I say, on the LORD.

There is a good passage in Hebrews 10, beginning with verse 35 that has to do with waiting on the Lord:

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience , that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:35-39).

Many of you will remember David's words in Psalm 40:1-3:

1 I waited patiently for the LORD ; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

No one ever regrets that they have waited for the Lord, but many have had many regrets because at some point in their lives they have run ahead of the Lord. So let us ask the Lord give us the grace to wait that we may experience the fulness of the blessing, or blessings, that He has for us.

After the closing hymn – James 1:2-4:

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work , that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.