

Series: The Name of God #1662

Title: Exodus 3

God Commands, Moses Objects

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We are back today in Exodus chapter 3 and last time we began to observe an alternating structure in the text. I hope you took some time to see this for yourself in your own Bible. God begins in Exodus 3, verse 2. Moses responds to God in verse 3. And this alternates all the way down to verse 10. God speaks, Moses responds, God speaks, Moses responds and so forth. And then, at verse 11 the order reverses itself. Moses speaks to God and God replies. Let's see this now, reading in Exodus chapter 3 beginning at verses 7 and 10 and going on from there.

Remember, I am giving you an overview of these verses. We will circle back for some of the details soon. The point here is to notice the nature of the dialogue between the Living God and His servant Moses. Verse 7, **"The Lord said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.'**" And verse 10, **"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."** Now listen to Moses' response.

Verse 11 of Exodus 3, **"But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'"** In the very next verse, verse 12, God responds, **"And He [God] said, 'Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.'" Then Moses again in verse 13 inquires about God's name. "Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?'"** And then, in verses 14-15 holy God responds to Moses. The text says, **"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and [God] said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' ¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons 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 this is My memorial-name to all generations.'"**

This question and answer session between God and Moses at the burning bush reveals a lot to us about both the Lord and Moses. We have time to think about only some insights. To do this, let's go back to verse 5. Moses has turned aside to look at the burning thorn bush and God calls Moses by name, "Moses! Moses!" And he says, "Here I am." Then verse 5, **"[God] said, 'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" God is being very gracious to this man Moses by warning him to take off his sandals. This causes Moses to bend down and untie his sandals which keeps him from rushing brashly into the presence of holy God. This gives Moses time to step back and give God the reverence and fear He so rightly deserves. How casual are we when we come into the presence of Almighty God? I fear we are *too* casual. That's not what we find in Scripture. To worship the Lord requires awesome respect. Think about this the next time you enter into His presence. The place where you are standing is holy ground if God is there.**

Verse 6, **"He said also, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."** Here the Lord reveals Himself as the same God He has always been and always will be. "I am the God of...Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." This is a reference to the covenant God has made with these Patriarchs and the unilateral covenant God intends to keep. And I hope you remember that at Exodus 2, verse 24 we spent time looking back in Genesis at the covenant and I said we would hear about it again. Well, here it is!

Interestingly, Jesus refers to this scene here in Exodus over in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I'll read just one, in Mark 12:26 Jesus said, **"Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?'"** Jesus refers to this covenant.

In Peter's sermon, Acts 3, he also refers to this in reference to the God of the Patriarchs being the same God who glorified Jesus. I am reading Acts 3.13, "**The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus...**" I am pointing this out to you, in particular, because as we will soon see this has bearing on the name God reveals to Moses in these upcoming verses. There is a *strong* link between the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and God's name, "I AM WHO I AM."

And note this at the end of verse 6, "Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." Here is that holy fear of God again. When God encounters Moses the sandals come off, distance is kept, and the face is hidden for fear of seeing the Lord. So again, I ask myself. I ask you. Are we too casual in God's presence? This is a point of application well worth exploring if you are a leader in your church (an elder, a deacon, a pastor, a worship leader, a choir director, and the like). Does your worship service teach the people of God to revere God?

Sticking with our pace, let's go down to verse 11 and as I have already said, here, Moses takes the lead in the dialogue. "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'" Ah, with this reaction we can tell that God has caught old Moses off guard. In the previous verse God said, "I will send you to Pharaoh." But Moses doesn't care for this idea and he issues the first of five objections to God's command. "*Me, Lord?*" Oh, this response from Moses is incredibly ironic, isn't it?

Remember back to what we said in chapter 2? Back there, forty years previous, when Moses struck dead the Egyptian, oh then, he was more than ready to lead his people the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. He was so ready he jumped the gun on God and took matters into his own hands only to be shocked and saddened to learn the Hebrews did not accept his leadership and neither was God ready to use Moses. Then Moses was strong in his own pride. Now Moses is weak after God has humbled him. (For forty years in the wilderness, mind you.) Moses has gone from self-confidence to self-doubt. We can hear his mind at work, "But I've been gone from Egypt for four decades. I am just a shepherd now. What could I possibly do to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of the powerful Pharaoh?"

Please listen carefully to God's response to Moses' objection. Verse 12, "[God] said, 'Certainly I will be with you...'" Let me interject by quoting Bruce Waltke, "Significantly, God does not answer Moses' surface question by reassuring him of his educational background, leadership potential, or other talents that might qualify him for this job. To Moses' question, 'Who am I?' God responds with, 'I will be with you.' The promise of divine presence is more than sufficient for all the challenges and obstacles. Moses' qualifications are irrelevant – God will make it happen. The promise of divine presence signifies the transfer of the holy, consuming fire from the bush to Moses and [God's] people (*An Old Testament Theology*, 364)." Unquote. Back to the text, God continues, "And this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

In verse 12 God begins to make crystal clear to Moses that *God* has always been the One who will lead His people out of Egypt and He will do it by *His presence with them*. As we will see, His name "I AM WHO I AM" indicates this. God requires of Moses that he depend on the Spirit of God, not on his own strength, merits, qualifications, and background and experience. I remind you again that when Moses seemed most qualified (Exodus 2) was precisely when God did *not* use him. But now that the Lord has driven the pride and arrogance and self-dependence out of old Moses, *now*, God is prepared to unleash him as the human leader of the Israelites and God's spokesperson to the Pharaoh.

This is very instructive for us. How many times in Christian communities of various kinds have we given leadership to persons who, in our estimation, are the most educated and well qualified. And yet, how many times have we been disappointed at how these very leaders have led us not closer to God, but farther away from him. We are doing this wrong. What we need is God's presence with us and God's servants who have God's presence with them – people who are God dependent. Join us next time because God Is!

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