The Burning Bush

Exodus 3:1 - 4:17

Bible Memory Verse

Exodus 2:25 NIV

And God said, "I will be with you."

Bible Story

Moses was faithfully tending the flocks of his father-in-law on the far side of the desert. He came to a mountain, which is referred to as the mountain of God. It was there on this mountain that God called to Moses out of a burning bush. The text tells us: "that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up" (Exodus 3:3). And even more specifically, "there *the angel of the Lord* appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush" (Exodus 3:2 emphasis mine). Moses' curiosity drew him to this strange phenomenon.

As he approached, God called Moses' name to him from within the bush. Moses responded with, "Here I am." Then the Lord warned him not to come any closer because the ground he is on is holy and told Moses who He was: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Moses' response to this was hiding his face because he was afraid.

Then God explained to Moses that He had seen the misery of his people in slavery in Egypt and He had heard their cries for deliverance. And then the big shocker came. "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10). I wonder what Moses felt like at that moment when the burden of a whole people group and all that comes with that responsibility was presented to him? Wow, what an assignment!

What follows next in the narrative is an interchange between God and Moses. Moses brings up various issues, some selfish some not so selfish.

Here is how God engages with Moses:

- God's encouragement is that He will be with Moses (Exodus 3:12);
- the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob announces His name—Yahweh (Exodus 3:14);
- He provides Moses with power to display miraculous signs so the people will believe (Exodus 4:2ff.);
- He reminds Moses that He is in charge and the God of the universe, so do not worry, but take your brother Aaron with you to help you (Exodus 4:11-17).

So now go to Egypt, God says.

Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses later receives the Ten Commandments (and the rest of the law). Moses meets with God numerous times on this mountain. It is regarded as holy, the dwelling place of God. We will see this mountain again and again.

The name God gives Moses to give to his people is Yahweh, the "I AM." This name is what orthodox Jews will still not speak to this day because they regard the name with utter holiness that to even speak the word will corrupt the holy nature of it. This name seems to imply continued existence. This could be applied to "being with" the Israelites and/or to always "being" in existence. We get a glimpse of how the Jews regarded this name in the Gospel of John when Jesus is arrested. When the arresting party came, they asked if Jesus was Jesus of Nazareth. He stated: "I am he" (John 18:5). With that pronouncement of "I am he" the crowd drew back and fell down to the ground (Exodus 18:6). Furthermore, in conversation with the Jewish leaders of his day, when Jesus said that he was before Abraham was. This infuriated the teachers of the law because that statement made him equal to God. Yahweh is a holy name, and yet a very personal name. God chose to reveal his name, his first name to us. In declaring His name to Moses to give to the Israelites, might His intention been less, "here is my name, now don't say it because you are inadequate?" Rather, "here is my name, now you know me personally." We live and were created by a very personal and loving God to which we know His very intimate name.

Life Application

Emphasis in the classroom can be on the objections that Moses states in response to Yahweh's call. Moses feels feeble, unworthy, incapable, without power or persuasion, or belief. He worried about his own state as well as those who will be asked to believe in him. He asks rather good questions at the beginning, but then degenerate into "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (Exodus 4:13). The Lord seemed patient throughout Moses' previous inquiries, but this last one revealed lack of trust and belief in Yahweh so the Lord was angry (Exodus 4:14). As the present reader and learner of this text, we can identify with Moses his feelings of inadequacy and his persistent questioning. In light of an all-powerful God we still tend to accentuate the things we think are major in our eyes, which, however, are not quite major in the eyes of the Lord. We tend to make excuses rather than willingly submit and obey. Why do we always go kicking and screaming? Fallen humanity, I suppose.

God uses people to accomplish His plans. We are the extension of Christ, the Word, to the world today. Most of us are the only Bible anybody will ever read. We carry around the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ with us all the time. Do we act like it? Do we really think that we have something precious that is worth sharing and giving away to those around us? Remember, the encouragement of the Lord God to Moses was that He would be with him. God is with you. One of the most profound truths of all Scripture, but often the most forgotten or the most unrealized. God can and does use people—especially those who the world thinks are useless. You matter to God. He loves you.

When God asks you to do something. Do it.

Review Questions

1. What was the mountain called that Moses was hanging around? The mountain of God.
2. What did Moses see on the “mountain of God”? A bush that was burning but not burning up.
3. Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush? The Angel of the LORD.
4. How did Moses react to the Angel of the LORD in the burning bush? Moses hid his face because he was afraid.
5. What did the Angel of the LORD tell Moses he was going to go and do? Help rescue the people of God (the Israelites) from slavery in Egypt.
6. Was Moses really excited about this “leading” job assignment? No.
7. There are two names given to this mountain that Moses saw the burning bush on. What are those two names? Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai
8. When Moses asked what God’s name was, what did the Angel of the LORD say? “I AM” - Yahweh

Coloring Sheet

Next page


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