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Moses: God's Mediator to the People of Promise

Exodus 3

INTRODUCTION

You know, just when things look real promising, things get real ugly. This seems to be the theme of God's story of Redemption. God's people sin, things get real screwy, God steps in and provides a solution through person/persons of his choice, they sin, things get real screwy. One of the recurring themes that keeps popping up over and over again is that God does not give up; that somehow all that happens in human history fits into His redemptive plan.

If you thought the Osborn's had a dysfunctional family life, Jacob's parenting skills would make anyone's skin crawl. First of all, Jacob was a deceiver, a polygamist, and had a habit of choosing favorites among his sons.

So bad was his parenting skills, that all of his sons conspire to kill Jacob's favorite son Joseph, but instead sold him into slavery, took the cloak his father made him and cut it up and smeared goat blood on it to deceive their father into believing that Joseph had died.

What the brothers did not know is that everything they did God was using for his redemptive purposes. Joseph winds up being promoted from slave to second in Pharaoh's command, develop a God ordained plan for surviving seven years of famine.

God then uses Joseph to save the lives of his father and brothers, they wind up moving to Egypt under Joseph's care and all of Jacob's descendants (the Israelites) live there for about 400 years.

During the 400 years that Israel stayed in Egypt, they grew from 70 people to millions. So what happens is that eventually Joseph is forgotten and the Israelites become enslaved to the Egyptians and enforces a law that all Jewish baby boys are to be thrown into the Nile river.

But God was not off on vacation during all this, for enables a Hebrew woman to hide here baby for three months and after he got too big to hide she made a basket, put him in it, and floats him down the Nile hoping someone will find him.

Somebody does find him; the daughter of Pharaoh finds him and adopts him as here own child. What is neat is that God lines things up so perfectly that he puts it into the heart of Pharaoh's daughter to pick Moses' own mother to nurse him and even paid her to do it!

Moses grows up as a prince in Egypt, discovers his fellow Hebrew being abused, gets ticked off and kills the Egyptian guard. Moses then runs off, hides and becomes a shepherd in Midian for about 40 years. During Moses' time in Midian, he married a woman and had a son.

Things were pretty bad for the Jews, and I am sure that they had assumed that God had forgotten them, but He didn't; listen to Exodus 2:23-25,

²³ During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel- and God knew.

In other-words, God saw the people of Israel suffering and out of love, He took pity on them. So what does God do? He calls an 80yr. old, used-up shepherd from Midian to be His mediator between Him and Israel.

I want to do something a little different this Sunday, I want take the time this morning to reflect not on the individual God calls but on the God of Redemption in relation to Moses and the people of promise.

The first thing we learn from Exodus 3 is that...

Moses was Called by a Holy God (vv. 1-6)

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy

ground." ⁶ And 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 at God.

So again here we have Moses who is minding his own business and who comes looking for him? God. Now the thing that is different about Moses is that, as we learn from Hebrews 11, he left Egypt because of his faith in God, for we read in Hebrews 11,

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

So if you saw a burning bush that was not burning, what would you do? I would go check it out, and that is exactly what Moses does. Moses checks out the burning bush and finds himself in the presence of the Living God.

So Moses has close encounter with the God of the Universe for the first time, and what does God tell Moses to do? ***"Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."***

So why did God tell Moses to take off his sandals? Because He is Holy. The Holiness of God is one of God's characteristics that is central to His character. Stephen Charnock once said, **"Power is God's hand or arm, omniscience His eye, mercy His bowels; eternity His duration, but holiness is His beauty."**

Another well known theologian wrote, "The holiness of God is not to be conceived of as one attribute among others; it is, rather, a general term representing the conception of His consummate perfection and total glory. It is His infinite moral perfection crowning His infinite intelligence and power." – A.A. Hodge

So central to God's character is His holiness that even the perfect, sinless angels in heaven respond in reverence and awe before God; turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 6.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds

shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (vv. 1-4)

Do you see the response of the angels? The Bible does not portray angels as little cupids or beings that have human form alone, the angels we see in Isaiah 6 are seraphim and they have an entirely different form: six wings (in revelation we learn that they are full of eyes in front and behind).

What is the response of these angels before God? Reverent worship! They cover their face with one set of wings, they cover their feet with the other set, and with one set they fly. And their response? Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" What was Isaiah's response as he witnessed all this, "I am a dead man, Woe is me!"

When Moses finds himself before the burning bush, what happens? God tells him to take off his sandals. Then God introduces Himself to Moses, "***I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.***" What does Moses do? He hides his **face!**

One of the things that we see in the Bible as we make our way through the story of redemptions is that God progressively becomes more specific in how He uncovers his plan and how He reveals himself. In Exodus 3, we see God in a way that we had not seen in the previous weeks. It is here we get a glimpse as to how we ought to approach Him.

One of the first lessons that Moses learns right from the beginning, before he is commissioned to function as God's Ambassador before Israel, is that God is Holy. God is holy this is why sin is such an offense to Him. Listen to what R.C. Sproul says about sin, "**Sin is cosmic treason. Sin is treason against a perfectly pure Sovereign. It is an act of supreme ingratitude toward the One to whom we owe everything, to the One who has given us life itself.**"¹

As we have learned so far, we are all by nature sinners. If the holy, perfect angles must cover their face and feet in the presence of a Holy God, so must we; this is exactly the feeling of Moses. Moses was called as an ambassador of a Holy God.

The second thing we learn in Exodus 3 is that...

Moses was Called by a Covenant Keeping God (vv. 7-12)

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

One of the things that we have seen and will see over and over again is that God is a covenant keeping God; He keeps his promises.

- After Adam and Eve sinned, God promised a seed that would come and restore all things by crushing the head of the serpent.
- Even though God had every right to destroy all the living in Noah's day, he spared Noah and his family to start over. God promised Noah that He would never again destroy the world with a flood, and it would be through Noah's descendents that the promised seed would come.
- And in the midst of wicked people groups in the form of nations, God honored his promise to Adam and Noah by calling out one man, Abraham for the purpose of fulfilling his promise to Adam, Eve, and Noah.
- God promises Abraham many descendents, and even in the shadow of slavery, heartache, and night and day oppression for 350 years, God honors his promise to Abraham by multiplying his descendents from 70 people to at least 2 million.
- Now God chooses Moses to lead the Jews to the land God had promised Abraham.

One of the things that we learn about God in this passage is that he is the God who sees. God was fully aware of the experience of the Jews, he was not off the clock during those 350 years in Egypt, and He certainly was not off the clock, sleeping, or on vacation during the hard years of slavery under Pharaoh's heel. Look at v. 7, ***Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of***

the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Not only is God the God who sees all things, but He is also a God who cares. He knows that the people of promise are suffering and He develops a remedy by sending Moses as His mouthpiece.

This passage tells us something about God and the nature of suffering: Suffering for the one who belongs to God is always temporary (could last 1 year or 50 years, but it is never forever). God decides to deliver those under the covenant promise through Moses. What is Moses' response, "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*"

[Moses at one time took matters into his own hands by killing an Egyptian guard]

Moses understands that he is not sufficient for the task and that is exactly why I think God chooses Moses for the task. What was the solution to Moses' insufficiency? "*But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.*" And that is exactly what happens after Israel is led out of Egypt.

One of the purposes of God choosing someone like Moses to led the Jews out of Egypt was to demonstrate that there is only One God in all the Universe and, which leads me to our final point...

Moses was Called by the Only True God (vv. 13-22)

¹³ Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. ¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt," ¹⁷ and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey." ¹⁸ And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the

*Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'*¹⁹ *But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.*²⁰ *So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.*

What is really interesting is the question Moses asks God, ***"If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"***

The reason why Moses wanted to know the name of God is that he knew that the Israelites would ask. Think about it, Abraham's descendents have spent 400 years in Egypt. The Egyptians had a name for every god they created; Moses wants to know how he should answer them.

So what is God's answer? ***God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"***¹⁵ ***God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.***

There are two names that God give Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" and "The LORD (Yahweh), the God of your fathers." One thing we should understand here is that the name Yahweh seems to be used interchangeably with I AM for they both built out of the same Hebrew word (hayah). Notice...

- V. 14. ***"I AM has sent me to you."***
- V. 15. ***"Yahweh... has sent me to you."***

Yahweh is the personal name for God, the Jews revered the name so much that every time a scribe would make copies of the OT, he would always start over with fresh ink and pen before he had to write Yahweh. Other names of God such as Elohim are used only 2600 times, while Yahweh is used 6828 times.

The point God was making by telling Moses, ***"I AM WHO I AM... I AM has sent me to you..."***¹⁵ ***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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations..."*** is five fold...

- 1) God exists and is alive
- 2) God's personality and power is owing solely to himself
- 3) God never changes

- 4) God, whom all power and energy in the universe flows
- 5) God is the One to whom all creation should conform its self for He is the Creator.

In other words, God is God alone and there is no other. He is utterly unique to any of the Egyptian gods and would even prove it; look at v. 19, “***But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.***”

What He will wind up doing is reduce the Egyptian gods to nothing more than impotent idols fashioned in the imagination of mortal men and women. God will prove that He alone is...

- Is the supplier of every need...
- Sovereign over human life...
- Ruler of all that exists...

God is the great I AM, the One who commissioned Moses as His ambassador to Israel and Egypt, and the One in whom we have our life and breath. It is the great I AM who alone is the author of Redemption.

Application

When you study the life of Moses, what you see is that he, was in many ways, a model of the promised seed who was to come: he was kind-of like a king (judge), kind-of like a priest, and kind-of like a prophet among the Israelites. God used Moses to lead a nation out of captive slavery into the land of promise, but do you know how many who were led out of Egypt actually got to see the promised land? Two: Joshua and Caleb.

God promised a prophet like Moses who was to come, “***I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.***” (Deut. 18:18)

This prophet would be perfect, for he would be

- Prophet (He spoke for God),
- Priest (He is a priest in the order of Melchizedek),
- King (every knee will bow and every tongue will confess...)

God has drawn near to us in Jesus Christ. In John 8:56-58, Jesus answers the criticism of the Jewish leaders of His day by telling them, "***Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.***"⁵⁷ ***So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"***⁵⁸ ***Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."***

Jesus is the only person that has led and will lead millions out of the oppressive bondage of sin into the promise rest of His everlasting love. Jesus is like Moses, but unlike Moses Jesus is a perfect Prophet, Priest, and King.

So what have we learned about the call of Moses?

- He was called by a Holy God (vv. 1-6)
- He was called by a Covenant Keeping God (vv. 7-12)
- He was called by the Only True God (vv. 13-22)

What are some of the principles we learn through Exodus 3?

- God is Holy: worship Him!
- God keeps His promises: Trust Him!
- God is the Only True God: Live for Him!

Why?

For all the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus Christ. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. (2 Cor. 1:20)