

## Exodus 4 - Thursday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

- In chapter three, we left Moses at the burning bush questioning the Lord about going back to Egypt to deliver the Israelites.
- The Lord assures him that He will be with him, and that it won't be easy because Pharaoh will not want to let them go.
- We begin chapter four with Moses continuing to question the Lord, because he is unwilling to do what God wants him to do.

- You would think that the burning bush would be enough for Moses, but it's not. Moses is sort of demanding more assurance from God.
- We really shouldn't be too hard on Moses, because we're much the same way in how we doubt the Lord and are reluctant to go.

"Those whom God sends are often slow to go, and yet men whom the Lord never sent push themselves into office eagerly."

Charles Spurgeon

**4:1** Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

- Moses questions God because he's concerned that the Israelites won't believe him, listen to him and doubt that God appeared to him.
- What's interesting is that the Lord assured him that they will listen to him, and that's exactly what happens when He gets to Egypt.
- It seems that Moses is displaying unbelief in the Lord to do what He said he would do. He's simply not trusting the Lord at all.

**2** So the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." **3** And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

- Ok, this is funny! The Lord responds to him by asking him what's in his hand and when Moses says; "a rod," God says; "cast it down."
- Moses casts it to the ground, it becomes a serpent, and then we're told that; "Moses fled from it." What a leader he is, he "fled from it!"
- He's probably wishing he would have never thrown it down to the ground in the first place, especially if he knew it would be a snake.

- What is God doing with Moses by asking him what's in his hand, then having him throw it down so He could turn it into a snake?
- One thought is that God wants Moses to know that He's going to use what's in his hand; a rod, to accomplish His purpose.
- Moses' Rod will be called the "Rod of God" and be used to part the Red Sea, bring water from the rock, and raised for victory in battle.

One commentator aptly noted that; "God used what was in Shamgar's hand (Judges 3:31). God used what was in David's hand (1 Samuel 17:49). God used the jawbone of a donkey in Samson's hand (Judges 15:15). God used five loaves and two fish in the hand of a little boy (John 6:9). God didn't use the scepter that was in Moses' royal hand when he lived in Egypt, but He did use the simple shepherd's staff."

**4** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), **5** "that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

- You've got to hand it to Moses, pun intended, for coming out of hiding and actually reaching his hand out to grab this snake by the tail.
- Moses knew that the tail was the most dangerous place to grab a snake, yet he did it anyway, and when he does, it becomes a rod.
- God is doing this for Moses so that the Israelites will believe the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had appeared to him.

- One more comment on God having Moses grab the snake by the tail; perhaps He wants to teach Moses that he can trust Him.
- He's also teaching Moses to not fear, even when the situation appears to be fearful. He wants for Moses to be fearless and trust Him.
- Moses will be dealing with Pharaoh, who is a snake of sorts, and because of this will need to be bold in how he handles him as well.

- It's interesting to note, according to Wikipedia, that the snake, namely the cobra, was a symbol of deity and divinity in ancient Egypt.

The **Uraeus** (plural **Uraei** or **Uraeuses**, from the Greek οὐραῖος, from Egyptian *j'r.t* (*iaret*) "rearing cobra") is the stylized, upright form of an Egyptian spitting **cobra** (**asp**, **serpent**, or **snake**), used as a symbol of **sovereignty**, **royalty**, **deity**, and divine authority in **ancient Egypt**.  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uraeus>

- Even with King Tutankhamun, a.k.a. "King Tut," you can see the veneration of the serpent with the cobra like appearance of the head.

**6** Furthermore the LORD said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. **7** And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. **8** "Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. **9** And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land."

- This is crazy, God is going way over the top, so-to-speak, to assure Moses that the Israelites will believe and heed his message.
- Keep in mind that God has already given His word that they will listen to him and believe him, but God's Word isn't enough for Moses.
- God in His grace empowers Moses to do these miracles so he will have more confidence in Him and be willing to do what God wants.

- In order to do this, God gives Moses three signs each of which are significant in their meaning first to Moses, then to the Israelites.
- The first sign, with the snake was significant in that it was God's way of saying; "if you obey me, your enemies will be made powerless."
- The second, with the hand turning leprous was God's way of saying; "I can take that which is unclean or impure, and make it pure."
- The third sign of water staying as blood was God's way of saying; "this is judgment for their unbelief in Me, and my miraculous power."

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." 11 So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? 12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

- You would think that, at this point, Moses has enough confirmation from the Lord and will stop being reluctant to go, but no!
- He tells God that he's not eloquent," and that he's "slow of speech and tongue," meaning that he may have had a speech impediment.
- Other commentator's suggest that he had lost his ability to speak in the Egyptian tongue after all those years in the desert.

- God sort of rebukes Moses by telling him that He made man's mouth in the first place." He's really saying; "I don't make mistakes."
- God, once again, ever so patiently reassures Moses that He will be his mouth and teach him what to say. Moses is just the mouthpiece.
- What more does Moses need here. Come on already! But no! He still doesn't want to go as we'll see here in the next verse.

13 But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." 14 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. 16 So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. 17 And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."

- Ok, God has had it with Moses, He is now angry against Moses and tells him how it's going to be; "Aaron will be his spokesman."
- God is not angry with Moses because he is unable, God is angry with Moses because he is unwilling, and Moses is absolutely unwilling!

- Pastor Chuck Smith said it best when he stated; "God is not looking for ability, He is looking for availability."

"God was not angry when Moses asked *Who am I* (Exodus 3:11). He was not angry when Moses asked "Who should I say sent me?" (Exodus 3:13). He was not angry when Moses disbelieved God's Word and said *suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice* (Exodus 4:1). He was not even angry when Moses falsely claimed that he was not and had never been eloquent (Exodus 4:10). But God was angry when Moses was just plain unwilling."

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- God is not giving into Moses by having his older brother Aaron be his spokesman, He's doing it as a discipline towards Moses.
- Aaron will prove to be a source of problems for Moses when he makes the golden calf and builds the altar at Mt. Sinai. (Exodus 32:1-6)
- His two sons, Nadab and Abihu, will be struck dead by the Lord Himself because they offer strange fire on the altar. (Leviticus 10:1-7)
- Then, to add insult to injury, Aaron with Moses' older sister Miriam, will lead a rebellion against him. (Numbers 12:1-8)

"By this reluctance Moses lost much honor, for Aaron became the high priest, and he obtained a helper who proved to be a hindrance."

Charles Spurgeon

18 So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses "Go in peace."

- Well it's about time Moses! My goodness, go already! Finally, he gets Jethro's blessing, and is willing to go to Egypt.
- Notice that conspicuously absent from what Moses tells Jethro is how God appeared to him with the miracles in the burning bush.
- If this were me, I would have had some fun with this and shown Jethro some rod and hand tricks to sort of blow his mind a little bit.

19 Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." 20 Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

- For God to assure Moses that it's ok to go back to Egypt implies that Moses was afraid, and God knew it. God knows when we fear.
- After God assures Moses to not be afraid, he sets out for Egypt with his wife, his sons, and the "Rod of God," in his reluctant hand.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. 22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"

- God then tells Moses that he will harden Pharaoh's heart because he will not let them go until their firstborn sons die.
- God is saying is that He will have to bring death to the firstborn of Egypt, in order for Pharaoh to release the firstborn of God, Israel.

- When God says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, it doesn't mean that God is making it so that Pharaoh doesn't stand a chance.
- Pharaoh's heart was already hard, God was just giving Pharaoh over to the hardness of his sin calloused heart.
- In Exodus 8:15, we're told that Pharaoh hardened his heart, in other words, God was sort of confirming the condition of his hard heart.

24 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him.25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" 26 So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!" -- because of the circumcision.

- How crazy is this? Now God wants to kill Moses. We're just not off to a good start here are we now? Wow! What's going on?
- It appears that Moses is still being reluctant to do what God has commanded him to do. This time it's that he won't circumcise his son.
- His wife, Zipporah is angry at him, and does it for him, then throws the foreskin at Moses' feet and tells him he's a "husband of blood."

- What's interesting is that Zipporah takes the boys and goes back to Midian and we don't see her again until we get to chapter 18.
- Apparently this separation of sorts between Moses and Zipporah meets with God's approval. Perhaps God wants them out of the way.

- Why is God so adamant about Moses circumcising his son?
- Perhaps God wants this done in obedience before he enters Egypt and can't bless him until he gets rid of this area of the flesh.

27 And the LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him.28 So Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.29 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.30 And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people.31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

- Moses and Aaron finally meet, just as God had said, and Moses proceeds to tell him everything that God had commanded him.
- The two of them gather the Israelite elders, showed them the signs, and told them that God was now going to deliver them.
- They respond by bowing their heads and worshipping the Lord because He had visited them and looked on their affliction.

Lesson I can learn from Exodus chapter four:

1. Like with Moses in verse one, our greatest fear in sharing the good news with others, is that we don't think that they will listen.
2. Like the rod in Moses' hand, God may want to use what is in our hand, by having us cast it down for Him to do with as He pleases.

- Perhaps the Lord would ask us, "what's in your hand?" Maybe He wants to use whatever it is that we have or poses for His glory.
- It may be a talent, a trade, or some work of our hands. It may be a possession that we have or use, and God would say, "Cast it down."
- He wants to show us what He is capable of doing with it, and that we will be able to handle it, as outrageous as it may seem.

3. Like the snake, God may demonstrate to us beforehand how it is that He desires to use us, to introduce us to His plan and purpose.
4. God's Word is good enough. To ask for signs actually displays a lack of faith. God has given us His Word, as He did with Moses.
5. God isn't looking for eloquent smooth tongued fast talkers. Actually He's looking for Moses' so at the end of the day, He gets the glory.
6. God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. He chooses and uses what seems like a foolish choice to confound the wise.
7. God will never be angry with us if we're unable because He Himself is able. However He may be angry with us if we're unwilling.
8. God wants us in His perfect will as opposed to His permissive will. Aaron becoming Moses' spokesman was not God's perfect will.
9. Regardless of how old you are, you should always show respect for your elders. Moses was 80 when he asked for Jethro's approval.
10. Like with Pharaoh, God may give a man over to his hard heart when they continually reject Him. His Spirit doesn't strive forever.
11. Obedience to God is not only when it's convenient or easy. God may require us to cut out the flesh before He can bless and use us.
12. Unless we, like Moses in conflict with Zipporah over circumcising his son, have our house in order, we cannot lead God's people.

**1 Timothy 3:1-7** 1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. NIV

- Once again, we have a place here in this chapter where Moses becomes a picture of Jesus the Christ in typology as a deliverer.
- We looked at about 20 of these a couple of weeks ago when we were in chapter two, and now we'll look at just one here in chapter four.

MOSES	JESUS
Moses returns to Egypt when all the men die which sought his life. (Exodus 4:19)	Jesus returns from Egypt when all are dead which sought his life. (Matthew 2:20)