

Lesson 52

God Calls Moses

God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God called Moses while he was watching flocks in the desert of Midian. God wanted Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of slavery to the land of Canaan. But Moses objected several times to God's call before submitting to his will.

Key Passages

Exodus 3:14, 4:1–9

Memory Verse

Exodus 20:1–3 And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

"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. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew" (Exodus 2:23–25). Exodus 2 ends with the Israelites crying out to God because of their slavery and God acknowledging their cry. Then, chapter 3 jumps to Moses alone in the wilderness, shepherding his father-in-law's flock. Moses had been living in Midian for 40 years when, on this day, he saw an amazing sight—a burning bush that did not burn up! In this amazing scene of God speaking to Moses from the burning bush, God commanded Moses to remove his sandals because the ground was holy (Exodus 3:5). God reminded Moses of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to demonstrate his faithfulness to keep his promises (Exodus 3:6). Then God promised to deliver the Israelites from Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land (Exodus 3:7–9). Finally, he gave Moses his calling: to go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10).

Upon hearing his calling, Moses had doubts, questions, and concerns, which God patiently addressed. Moses' first response was, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (Exodus 3:11). God promised to be with him. Then Moses asked what name for God he should give the Israelites. God answered, "I am who I am." Moses' next concern was how to respond if the Israelites wouldn't believe God appeared to him and sent him. God then gave Moses three signs to

demonstrate God's power and authority for his calling. God changed Moses' staff into a serpent, turned his hand leprous and then clean again, and told him how he would change water from the river into blood (Exodus 4:2–9). After these signs, Moses protested that he was a poor speaker and asked God to send someone else. God was angry with Moses, yet he promised to prepare Moses' brother, Aaron, and to teach them both what to say (Exodus 4:10–17). Then Moses obeyed, asked his father-in-law for permission to leave, took up his wife and sons, and returned to Egypt. Aaron met him, and the brothers gathered the elders of Israel and presented God's message of deliverance along with the miraculous signs. The elders believed and worshipped God when they heard that he cared about their affliction (Exodus 4:29–31).

Historical/Apologetics Background

A fascinating passage in the conversation between God and Moses is when Moses wanted to know what to say to the Israelites when they asked for God's name. God responded with specific names that reveal aspects of his character, which are dramatically opposed to the false gods of Egypt. First, God said, "I am who I am" and "I am has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:13–14). I am who I am refers to God as the self-existent one. God exists as an independent deity. No reality exists before God; he is the eternal one. He does not change; he is immutable. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I the Lord do not change" (see also James 1:17 and Hebrews 13:8). The word Lord in this passage is YHWH, which is the basis for the pronunciation "Yahweh." Yahweh comes from the Hebrew root haya, which means "to be," and is part of I am. God's use of Yahweh confirmed his existence and his presence. He is the ever-present helper. The false Egyptian gods, which the Israelites knew about, were mostly specific, territorial gods, such as the sun god (Ra), the god of the earth (Geb), the goddess of the sky and the heavens (Nut), or the god of the afterlife (Osiris). They were NOT omnipresent, eternal, or immutable.

Next, God 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" (Exodus 3:15). In this verse, God gave Moses and the Israelites a reminder of his covenant with their forefathers. At this time, the Israelites did not know God. They had forgotten his promises to them. Yet God invited them into a personal relationship with him. No Egyptian god was like this.

This personal relationship with his creation was demonstrated in Jesus Christ, who referred to himself using the name I am while on earth. Jesus gave the following seven "I am" statements in the Gospel of John:

I am the bread of life (John 6:35). I am the light of the world (John 8:12). I am the door (John 10:9). I am the true vine (John 15:1). I am the good shepherd (John 10:11). I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

Each of Jesus' statements shows his love and purpose to redeem lost sinners. When the Jews questioned who he claimed to be, Jesus responded, "Truly,

truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:53–58). By using I am, Jesus claimed to be God, the self-existent, eternal one. The Jews recognized this and attempted to stone him for blasphemy. They did not recognize Jesus as their Messiah even when he performed amazing signs, demonstrating his power and authority as God.

The Jews looked for miraculous signs in prophets and others claiming to come from God. This began in Exodus when Moses performed the three signs (staff into snake, leprous hand healed, and water to blood) to show the Israelites that God had appeared to him and had sent him. The signs God gave Moses showed amazing power over creation and validated Moses' message and authority. The miracles Jesus performed should have caused the Jewish leaders of his day to respond the way the Israelite leaders did when they heard from Moses and Aaron and saw the signs they performed. Instead of responding with faith and worship, the Jews in Jesus' day charged Christ with blasphemy and called for his crucifixion.

May we read and believe the testimony of God. Jesus validated his claim to be God through his miracles and his resurrection from the dead. And through Jesus, we who are children of God have the privilege of knowing Yahweh as our Father—the great I am!

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