

Exodus 3:1-11: The Call of Moses

[We remember Moses' story: *the people [the Hebrews] multiplied and became very strong. King Herod began to oppress the Hebrews. ..Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews* you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."* [Ex. 1: 20b, 22]

Moses was born to Levite father and Levite mother... she [mother] hid him for three months.³ When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river ... ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him ... and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'* [Ex. 2: 3, 5-6, 10] Thus, Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace.

11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk.¹² He looked killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian. [Exodus 2: 11-12, 15]

He had sinned when he had killed an Egyptian, and as a consequence he has suffered forty years of separation from his people and family. But the years have passed. He has settled down to a shepherd's life in Midian, content with the family of Jethro the priest. Moses is now eighty years of age. ¹

[Experience of burning bush]:

The depression and loneliness of being a "stranger" had somewhat lightened. He had found a way to live by faith in that place of sojourn, in that dull, out of the way Midian, far from the excitement and glamour of palace life of Egypt. The lesson is that be faithful to God where you are. "My God is my help" [as Moses said]. And God will come. Probably when you least expect Him, for God comes in the ordinary. ²

God has to get our attention before He presents Himself to us.

Moses is walking along an old familiar path. He's probably been there hundreds of times. By chance, he lifts his eyes, and he beholds a rather strange sight on the mountainside. He sees a bush that seems to be on fire. He watches it, expecting it to crumble into gray ashes. But to his amazement, it burns on. That gets Moses' attention. Now comes the important part of the story. Don't stop with the burning bush. Don't let that be the center of your attention. Read verse 3: "Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.'" ³

It is now, when God has gotten Moses' attention, that God presents Himself to Moses. We must read verse 4:

"⁴When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am..'"

There are all sorts of ways that God gets our attention. Very few for whom *good fortune* has caused them to see God's spirit moving in their lives. Unfortunately, for most of us it takes *tragedy* to get our attention. In these tragedies, we may find the face of God. It is as though in these tragedies we are meeting God on the back side of the desert. God does not bring these tragedies, but God uses tragedies to get our attention. And He often presents Himself in the midst of tragedy. ⁴

God has to get our attention before He can present Himself. He's always looking for that opportunity to present Himself, and it comes when we give Him our attention, when we turn aside to see whatever burning bush is there. ⁵

¹ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 57.

² Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 60.

³ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 60.

⁴ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 60.

⁵ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 61.

When we are in God's presence, the ground whereon we stand is always holy; and we'd better take off our shoes. God had to remind Moses of that. Look at verse 5: "'⁵Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" This is a beautiful custom still widely practiced in the East. When you enter a temple, a palace, or even a private home, you take off your shoes. Everyone takes off his or her shoes on entering. It is a sign of reverence. ⁶

[In our home, we always take our shoes off]

Here are to practical leadings for us.

One, God is not someone you can "chummy (친한)" with. One of the glaring limitations of many modern expressions of the Christian faith is that God is domesticated, reduced to a good friend next door - or upstairs! - who is always there to attend not only our needs but our wants. ⁷ Inevitably, this God is pictured as the one who guarantees success and happiness. And when you carry that superficial understanding of who God is to its practical bottom line, you must conclude that only the "healthy, wealthy, and wise" can be on good terms with Him. What does this say to the poor, the desperately ill, the oppressed? The idea of chummy God who will give us everything we want if we will practice positive and possibility thinking long enough and hard enough is not Christian. It may be good psychology for some- but it's incomplete Christianity. ⁸

Now, let's consider the second leading. The practical rationale for taking off our shoes when we enter the temple is that they have dirt and dust on them, and the place and presence of God are not to be defiled. This symbolic points to the powerful reality of God's presence. The relationship God demands with His people is expressed in covenant, " For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy." (Lev. 11:44). ⁹

The sovereign God of the universe promises to dwell in the midst of His people (Ex. 29:44-45). That's a central theme throughout the Scripture. John puts it this way in his Gospel: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Greek word for dwelt literally means to "pitch a tent." So now in the new covenant, through Christ, God comes to pitch His tent" among His people. That's who God is, eternally, beginning with the old covenant in Genesis and Exodus and concluding with the new covenant that He made in Jesus Christ, and going on in that apocalyptic vision in the Book of Revelation of how it will be at the end of time. ¹⁰

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people (Rev. 21:3). By pitching His tent in our midst, God becomes present with us, identifies Himself with us; and the reality is that God is here. But there is a big condition: God demands something in return for His presence among us. If He is to identify with us, we are to identify with Him, so He commands us, "You shall be holy; for I am holy."

Let's review the lessons of the burning bush.

1. God appears in the ordinary.
2. God has to get our attention to present Himself to us.
3. In God's presence, the ground on which we stand is always holy, and we'd better take off our shoes. ¹¹

Fire was and continues to be associated with God's presence. Throughout the Scripture, fire is the emblem of deity. .. So the burning bush does symbolize God's presence. "The bush not consumed" is a symbolism that God's presence is eternal. *The angel of the Lord:* In some passages of Scripture, the angel seems to be different from God (Ex. 23:20-223; Num. 22:22; Judg. 5:23; 2 Sam 24:16; Zech. 1:12-13). In other phrases God and the Angel are identical and interchangeable (Gen. 16:7-12; 22:11-12; 48:15-16; Judg. 2:1; 6:11-24; 13:3-22). ¹²

It seems most appropriate to perceive the Angel of the Lord as a visible manifestation of God. Such visible manifestation of God in the Old Testament are called theophanies, from a word that means "an appearance of

⁶ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 61.

⁷ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 61.

⁸ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 62.

⁹ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 62.

¹⁰ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 62.

¹¹ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 63.

¹² Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco. TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 64.

God." They often occur in the midst of natural phenomena in fire, Exodus 3:2; in a cloud, Exodus 13:21; in a whirlwind, Job 38:1; in an earthquake, I King 19:11. They also appear in human form: Ex. 33:21-23; Is. 6:1; Gen. 18; Ezekiel 1:26-27.¹³

Words from the Burning Bush

God calls Moses. Moses responds, "Here I am."

God called Moses to deliver the Hebrews from the Egyptian bondage to the promised land.

¹³ Maxie D. Dunnam. *EXODUS: The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Word Books Publisher, 1987), 64.