



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Exodus Lesson 3: 3-4

Chapter two ended with four powerful statements about God: He heard their groaning, He remembered His covenant, He saw the people of Israel, and He knew. In chapters three and four God begins to act on that knowledge. I don't know that there is any direct significance, but when you look at chapters three and four there are also; four arguments from Moses and four signs to affirm Moses' authority is from God. While, once again it may be sheer happenstance and have absolutely zero meaning whatsoever, the number four did mean completion or wholeness in Hebrew numerology. While the number itself is interesting but may not have any meaning, I do not think it is coincidence that God provided a sign for each of Moses' arguments.

Moses' Four Arguments:

1. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children out of Egypt?" 3:11
2. "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" 4:1
3. "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." 4:10
4. "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." 4:13

Four Signs:

1. "...you will serve God on this mountain." 3:12
2. Moses' staff into a serpent – 4:2-5
3. Moses' leprous hand – 4:6-8
4. Water to blood – 4:9

Additionally, throughout this text God makes six very specific promises:

God's Six Promises:

1. "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..." 3:8
2. "But I will be with you...you shall serve God on this mountain." 3:12
3. "...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." 3:17
4. "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." 3:20
5. "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians..." 3:21
6. "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." 4:12 (repeated for Aaron in 4:15)

These six promises will be much of the foundation of the Jewish faith from this point onward, and will be a reference point used time and again to remind the Israelites of God's faithfulness and deliverance.

While the text has been focusing on Moses, at this point Yahweh absolutely takes center stage. In chapters three and four, including personal pronouns there are 98 direct references to God.

Before you begin: Chapter two ended with Israel crying out to God. While we know the mighty salvation that God is about to bring, at this point in



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time they have been slaves for over 400 years, that's a lot of years! Up until this point, as far as we see in Scripture, God has been silent and inactive on their behalf. Consider what God's chosen people must have been thinking and feeling at this point. Can you relate? Have there been times that you have been crying out to God in distress, and He seemed to be silent and inactive? Times it felt like He wasn't even hearing you? What can we learn from God's interaction with the Israelites at this point in time, and how can we apply that to strengthen our own faith?

While ultimately this section will focus on God, chapter three opens with Moses keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (Reuel) the priest. Moses has gone from being a pampered prince of Egypt, to a murderer on the run, to a country shepherd. As we will see, with each change of station Moses also experienced a change of attitude and perspective, which allowed him to become a powerful tool in the Lord's hand.

Think About It: Has there ever been a time when you felt like you had lost something important, or taken a significant step back by worldly standards, yet God used that situation to provide a way for you to serve Him?

Read Exodus 3:1

It is fascinating to consider that Moses marries the daughter of a priest, and his own brother was destined to become the patriarch of God's temple priesthood. The natural question arises, "Who was Jethro a priest for?" It is interesting when you consider Genesis 25:1-2, because the Midianites were also descendants of Abraham. When you consider texts like Exodus 18:1-

12, it seems likely that Jethro was already a believer in Yahweh, or converted upon hearing what God had done in delivering the Israelites. Also, Hebrews 5:6 reminds us that there was at least one priesthood that pre-dated the Aaronic priesthood. While Scripture does not directly answer this question, it is certainly possible that Jethro was, in some way, a priest of the God of Creation.

Moses has also traveled a great distance at this point in time. I encourage you to look at a map that demonstrates his route from Egypt to Midian, in which he had to travel across the entirety of the Sinai Peninsula. While a few maps placed Horeb in Midian, most had it placed in the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, which is why Mt. Horeb is also known as Mt. Sinai (sound familiar?), which is why it is also described here as, "the mountain of God." This is the first of many pivotal encounters Moses will have with God on this mountain.

Read Exodus 3:2-6

Here, Moses has his first direct encounter with God. Initially, verse two states, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." The Angel of the Lord is a fascinating individual throughout the Old Testament. Typically, when we see angels in Scripture there are a few important things to note:

- They only speak for the Lord (Acts 27:23-24)
- They consistently refer back to God as their source of authority (Luke 1:19)
- They reject worship (Rev. 19:9-10, 22:8-9)

Yet when we see The Angel of the Lord specifically:

- He uses personal pronouns when referring to the Lord (Gen. 16:7-11, 22:11-18; Ex. 3:2-6, Num. 22:22-35, Judges 2:1, Judges 6:11-23).
- This specific title is used interchangeably with God (Gen. 16:7-11, 18:1; Ex. 3:2-6, Judges 6:11-23, Judges 13:3-21, 2 Sam. 24:27)



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- He provides blessings by His own authority (Gen. 22:11-18)
- He accepts worship (Num. 22:22-35, Judges 13:3-21) as does the Commander of the Lord's Army (Joshua 5:13-15)
- He states that the ground where He stands is holy (Ex. 3:2-6). (as does the Commander of the Lord's Army in Joshua 5:13-15)
- He is also a mighty warrior who is frequently armed with a sword (Num. 22:22-35, I Chron. 21:16, 2 Kings 19:35)

While there is much debate concerning exactly who the Angel of the Lord is, it is clear from the text that He is no mere angel, but rather a manifestation of God. Along those lines, here are a few more things to consider:

- The Angel of the Lord is **never** seen in the New Testament. In fact, He is never seen after the Israelites enter into captivity.
- God the Father is continually present throughout the Old Testament, as is God the Spirit (Num. 27:18, Judges 3:10, 1 Sam. 16:14), yet if the Angel of the Lord is not the pre-incarnate Christ, Jesus is the only figure of the godhead who is absent in the Old Testament.

When all of this is considered together, it is likely that The Angel of the Lord (& the Commander of the Lord's Army) is the pre-incarnate Christ.

Think About It: If The Angel of the Lord is the preincarnate Christ, when considering what a mighty warrior He was, and what incredible power He operated with in the Old Testament, how does this impact your perception of passages such as Philippians 2:5-8?

In verse six, The Angel of the Lord introduces Himself to Moses as, "I am." "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This accomplishes multiple things: first of all, this establishes Him as deity, but it also affirms to Moses that God has not forgotten the covenant He made with Abraham hundreds of years before.

Think About It: Moses' reaction here is to hide his face for fear of looking at God. In comparison, how reverent are we when it comes to God?

Read Exodus 3:7-12

Verses 7-9 are a special literary technique called a chiasm. Chiasms are named after the Greek letter chi, which is in the shape of an X, the center point of the X is always what the writer is emphasizing. For instance in this text:

A. I have seen the affliction of my people (3:7)

B. I have heard their cry (3:7)

C. I have come to deliver them (3:8)

'B. The cry of the people has come to me (3:9)

'A. I have seen their oppression (3:9)

Verse seven reiterates what we saw at the end of chapter two: the Lord states, "I have seen the affliction... I have heard their cry... I know their suffering..." but here He adds to it in verse eight, "I have come to deliver them..." God has seen, He has heard, He knows, and now it is time and He is going to do something about it. I am sure this was music to Moses' ears, this was exactly what he has been waiting for! Until verse 10, "I will send *you*..."



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Moses has already tried to be the instigator of a revolution once and it didn't go too well for him. His immediate reaction is, "Oh no, that's not for me. I'm definitely not your guy." And then we have verse twelve, "But I..." Some of the most beautiful words in Scripture are, "but God..." In chapter two Moses was operating entirely on his own: his own authority, his own power, his own plan. But God is now the one leading this liberation, and things will go very differently.

Think About It: Consider texts like: Acts 10:40, Romans 5:8 & 15, 6:23, 9:16; 1 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 15:57; Ephesians 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:19. What do the words, "But God..." mean in your life?

Read Exodus 3:13-18

In verse 11 Moses lodged his first objection to God, and God took away that excuse. Now Moses makes his second argument, "Who should I even say sent me?" God's answer is, "You know who I am, now you go tell them who I am." God tells Moses to go straight to the elders, straight to the authorities, and let them know that God has heard their cries, He has seen their mistreatment and has now come to deliver them. It's amazing to me that after Moses' last interaction with his people, God says the elders will immediately believe him when he says that God has come to deliver them.

Read Exodus 3:19-22

While God says that the Israelites will believe Moses, He makes it clear from the beginning that Pharaoh will not. God tells Moses from the very beginning the chain of events that will unfold: God will strike the Egyptians with His mighty hand, and the Israelites will not only leave, but they will fully plunder the Egyptians on their way out. The word for "favor" in

verse 21 is the same word used in Genesis 6:8 where the text says that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. The implication here is not so much the idea of, "We are terrified of you and hate you, now go away quickly!" But rather genuinely wishing goodwill and grace on the Israelites as they leave. The text refers to the Israelites simply asking their Egyptian neighbors for clothes and riches, and the Egyptians freely handing them over.

Read Exodus 4:1-9

It appears that Moses also found the idea that the Israelite elders would immediately believe him to be amazing, because he didn't believe it. Granted, Moses' last interaction with his people did not go spectacularly, but at the same time God is literally speaking to him from a bush that is on fire but isn't being consumed. Sometimes human beings are just plain illogical. Moses knew and believed enough to hide his face when he realized God was talking to him, but yet he doesn't believe God when he is told that the people will listen to him.

What's truly amazing about this interaction, however, is God's response. God doesn't get angry at this point, he simply provides Moses what he asked for; a sign. Verse three is one of my favorite passages in all of scripture when I need a good chuckle, the mental image of Moses girding up his loins and running away in a panic (not that I would react any differently to a snake!). Even though Moses didn't immediately believe God when He said the Israelites would listen, and he did run in fear when he first saw the serpent, but when God tells him to reach out his hand and take it by the tail, he does so. Moses is on a bit of an emotional roller coaster here, but he truly is trying to trust the Lord.

God doesn't wait for Moses to say anything else, He goes straight from this sign into another: making Moses' hand leprous like snow and then instantly healing him. Then we come to sign number four, and



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the water Moses takes from the Nile becomes blood when he pours it on the dry ground. With these three signs alone God has demonstrated His ultimate power over nature, physical health and the elements.

Throughout Scripture, biblical authors oftentimes tell us exactly why they are writing. (Ex: 2 Peter 3:1, 1 Timothy 3:14-15). While there are many examples throughout Scripture of purpose statements, my daughter Ana pointed out that Exodus 4:5 is the first purpose statement we have recorded. What makes this amazing, is that the very first purpose statement comes directly from the mouth of God, it comes the very first time that God acts miraculously through a man, and it beautifully bookends, almost verbatim, the apostle John's purpose in recording the life of Jesus (John 20:31).

Take Action: Spend some time comparing Exodus 4:5 with John 20:30-31. What do you notice? What do these two passages teach us about the heart, mind and purpose of God's interactions with man?

Read Exodus 4:10-12

Yet after all of this, Moses is still not convinced. He lodges excuse number three, that he is slow of speech and tongue. This is very interesting when you consider Acts 7:22, "And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds." We know that Scripture does not contradict itself, so how do we make sense of this. I believe what we are seeing here is the difference in how Moses views himself, and how God views him. Moses tried to lead once and failed, clearly that is just not his "gift."

Think About It: Just like Moses, sometimes the way we view ourselves and the way God views us are vastly different. In our marriage my husband and I have a saying, "Let me be your mirror." The point is that while I consistently see my flaws, he sees the best in me. Truly though, God's word is our ultimate mirror. In what ways do you need to be more intentional about letting God be your mirror?

Think About It: Moses had tried to lead once and failed spectacularly. He wasn't overly enthusiastic to do so again. Can you relate? Have you tried to serve the Lord in a particular way only to have it be a complete flop. What happened next? Did you try again, or were you done? What would have happened if Moses had ultimately refused to try again?

Once again, God redirects Moses' attention. While Moses is still focused on himself and what he can or cannot do, God is trying to get him to focus on the power of the Almighty. An area I believe we really struggle in as the 21st century American church is the fact that whether we are good or awful at something truly doesn't matter, because it isn't about us. If I love to lead singing because I have a beautiful voice and I make it about me and my talent, that isn't pleasing to the Lord. If I refuse to lead singing when there's a need at a ladies' event because I don't have a good voice, that's not my talent, and it's too embarrassing to try, that isn't pleasing to the Lord either. In both scenarios we have firmly taken the focus off of God and put it on ourselves.

God's response to Moses here is to remind him that God will be with him. It's God's words he will be speaking. Moses simply needed to trust that God would equip him for the task at hand.



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Read Exodus 4:13-17

Poor Moses. His insecurities have not released him of God's expectations. (I believe there is a lesson here for us as well.) With this fourth excuse, Moses gets to the heart of the issue, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." He just does not believe he is up to the enormity of what God is asking him to do. Whether it's due to insecurities, fear, or something else altogether, at this point Moses basically tells God that he just flat does not want to go to the elders and Pharaoh.

Up until this point God has been very patient with Moses. God has responded to his doubt and insecurities with promises and signs to encourage him and offer proof that God would be with him. This time, however, Moses has gone too far. Verse 14 says that the Lord's anger was kindled against Moses. I would not want to have been in Moses' shoes at this point! God's response is basically, "Fine! Stand there and be quiet, I'll get Aaron to speak for you, but you're going!"

While Aaron will now be going with Moses to act as his spokesmen, God was very clear that Moses is still to take the staff and perform the signs. Aaron is there to help, but God is still the one in control. It is His power and authority, and His alone, that will inevitably bring Egypt to its knees.

Think About It: What are areas where you may tend to make excuses and tell God that you don't want to?

Take Action: God was not pleased when Moses didn't want to serve, and he isn't pleased with us in that situation either. Think of an area outside of your comfort zone, and make an intentional effort to grow in that area.

Read Exodus 4:18-23

With the blessing of his father-in-law, Moses gathers his family on donkeys and heads back to Egypt with the staff of God in his hand. It has been 40 years, and God assures him that all those who were seeking to kill him have died. The Lord reminds him to perform all the signs God has given him, but God knows from the very beginning how Pharaoh will respond.

In this text it specifies that God will harden Pharaoh's heart, however once again Scripture also says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Pharaoh's free will was in no way taken from him, but God knows that he will dig in his heels and refuse to acknowledge God's power. We can see God's heart here, He doesn't want to destroy Egypt and kill their sons, He warns them ahead of time and gives them every opportunity to turn to Him. Yet they refuse.

Think About It: As humans, oftentimes we try to put God into a box. We focus on his wrath without acknowledging His love, or we focus on His love without acknowledging His wrath. The truth is, however, that God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4). He is loving, compassionate and patient with those who turn to Him, but those who insist on living in rebellion to His word will see His vengeance.

It is easy to sit back in judgment on the Egyptians, "How ridiculous! God told them what would happen, why didn't they just listen!?" But don't we do the same thing? Jesus has made the sacrifice, and God has clearly told us how to apply that sacrifice to wash away our sins (Romans 6). He has told us that we must obey Him and keep His commandments (John 14:15). He has also told us the consequences if we don't (Romans 6:23).

Yet how often do we refuse to listen just like the Egyptians? How often do we put school, athletics, hobbies above Him and His church? How often do we remain silent instead of sharing the gospel out of fear? What can we begin doing to be intentional about not



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falling into the same rebellious trap the Egyptians fell into, so we can spend eternity in our Savior's love instead of His wrath?

Read Exodus 4:24-26

This text is both interesting and difficult. Why did God commission Moses and then immediately come to put him to death? In way back Genesis 17:10-14 God commanded Abraham to circumcise all the males of his household. Moses is several hundred years removed from that initial command, yet God's expectation that this command would be passed down generation to generation is clear.

It is also interesting that it is Zipporah, the Midianite, that circumcises her son to save Moses' life. Even still Moses is not the one who remedies the situation. Moses tried to lead a rebellion and failed. Moses failed to pass down God's command of circumcision to his own family. His wife has to step in and save his life because of his own poor leadership choices.

Yet, Moses will become one of the greatest leaders in history, second only to Jesus Himself. What a beautiful, tremendous example of what can happen when we truly allow God to mold us and work through us. Moses' journey demonstrates that true greatness is not found in human ability, but in obedience to the Almighty God.

Think About It: Moses life was almost forfeit because he failed to pass down God's command to his children. Judges 2:10 states, "And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that He had done in Israel." We are always only one generation away from apostasy. How are you doing with handing down your faith to the

next generation? How can you be more intentional about this going forward?

Read Exodus 4:27-31

Sure enough, exactly as God had foretold, the elders believe what Moses and Aaron tell them. For the first time in 400 years, they have hope, and their response is to immediately bow their heads and worship. God has seen. God has heard. God knows. He remembers His promises. And now, it is time, and God is going to act.