

Title: **THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD**
Text: Exodus 3:1-10
Subject: *Lessons From The Burning Bush*
Date: Tuesday Evening — February 21, 2005
Tape # Exodus #12

Introduction:

(Exodus 3:1-10) “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb. (2) And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed. (3) And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. (4) And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. (5) And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. (6) Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy 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 upon God. (7) And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (8) And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Moses was about as far from the out of the loop as a man can get. He was not in Egypt but in Midian. He was not involved in some great work, but tending his father-in-law's sheep. What a contrast to his former life in Pharaoh's court. There he was surrounded with all the luxury and refinement of his age. Here he is a nobody. An insignificant outsider, living upon the charity of his father-in-law.

While he was in Egypt, Moses had been very zealous for the children of Israel; but he had now been in Midian for forty years (Acts 7:30). He appeared to be on the fast track to nowhere. He had probably, long ago, concluded that God had left him live out his days in obscurity. He could not have been more mistaken.

THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

(Exodus 3:1) “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.”

One day, while taking care of his father-in-law’s sheep, he came to a place called Mt. Horeb, “*the mountain of God.*” Mt. Horeb is another name for Mt. Sinai. Moses called Mt. Sinai, “*the mountain of God*” (v. 1), because this is the place where the Lord Jesus came to Moses and revealed himself to him. It was here, in “*the mountain of God,*” that he learned “*the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.*” Truly, any place where the Son of God manifests himself to his us is “*the mountain of God.*”

But Moses gave this name, “*the mountain of God,*” to Mt. Sinai by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that he was inspired to do so to teach him and us, even before God gave his law from Mt. Sinai that Mt. Sinai’s fiery law had only one purpose. Its purpose is to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:19-25).

(Galatians 3:19-25) “Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (20) Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one. (21) *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. (22) But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

THE BURNING BUSH

Suddenly, while he was tending Jethro’s sheep, Moses had an eye-popping revelation. He would, in the days to come, see many astonishing things; but nothing would have made such a lasting, life-long impression upon him as this. What he saw that day would alter and control his life forever. He never forgot it. In fact, he spoke of this event and the things he saw and heard on this day when he was about to die (Deut. 33:16). Suddenly, he saw a bush burning with fire, and “*the bush was not consumed*” (vv. 2-3).

(Exodus 3:2-3) “And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed. (3) And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.”

This revelation of God in the burning bush was not given just to astonish Moses. It was not given just to give him a hair-raising, thrilling, sensational experience.

Proposition: The Lord God appeared to Moses in the bush to teach him vital lessons about himself and about his God, his people, and his salvation, lessons that he would need to both motivate and sustain him throughout the rest of his life.

Moses had been educated as the Son of Pharaoh in Egypt. He had the best education the world had to offer. But he was about to get a lesson in the school of grace. There he would get an education that cannot be gained anywhere else. Every true preacher is trained by God at...

- Burning Bush Bible College, with Moses,
- And Whale Belly Seminary, with Jonah.

THE ANGEL

First, “*the Angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame.*” — The word “*angel*” means “messenger.” We do not have to guess who this Angel, this heavenly Messenger is. It is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself who appeared to Moses in the flame, that One in whom and by whom alone God is revealed (Mal. 3:1; John 1:18).

(Malachi 3:1) “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

(John 1:18) “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him.*”

What was that bush in which the Lord God revealed himself to Moses? The word translated “*bush*” refers to a prickly bush, or a thorn bush. **This bush is that which came as the curse of God upon the ground because of man’s sin** (Gen. 3:18). The Lord God revealed himself to Moses in the thorn bush as if to show that he overrules and uses even the consequences of man’s sin to make known and accomplish his purpose of grace toward fallen sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Adam’s Fall
- Lot’s Incest
- Judah and Tamar
- Elimelech’s Departure
- David’s Sin

We have before us a type and picture of the God the Son dwelling in our nature. Here we see our God, who “*is a consuming fire*” (Heb. 12:29), appearing in a bush, a thorn bush, that burned with fire and was not consumed. So the Lord of Glory, in due time, appeared on this earth in human flesh, in our poor, nature, as one of us, God in our nature, that he might suffer all the fire of God’s holiness, justice, and wrath as our Substitute (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8)

And when the Lord Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and bore all the wrath of God for us, he was (like the sacrifices on the brazen altar) burned with the fire of God’s offended

justice; but with this great difference: — Those sacrifices were consumed by the fire. Christ, our great Sacrifice, was not consumed by the fire, but consumed the fire forever (Isa. 53:4-10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:9-14).

(Isaiah 53:4-10) “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(Colossians 2:9-14) “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (11) In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: (12) Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. (13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; (14) Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

What is our nature, at the best, but a poor dry thorn bush, fit for burning? Yet, as the bush Moses saw the bush burned with fire, the very fire of the shekinah glory of God, and saw that it was not consumed, so our nature with Christ in it burned with that same glory (“*We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*”) and was so sustained and preserved, that though the bush burned with fire it was not consumed.

GOD’S PEOPLE

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in our nature by grace (“*Christ in you, the Hope of glory.*”). Yes, the Son of God dwells in this prickly thorn bush that stands before you. This bush that burns with the fiery lusts of the flesh, the corruptions of this evil heart, the fiery darts of the devil, and the fiery opposition of the world shall not be consumed. Though ashes to ashes it must go and dust to dust, yet the bush shall not be consumed. It shall be resurrected in glory by “*the good will of him that dwelt in the bush!*”

And that which is true of me is true of you. When Moses saw the bush burning with fire, and yet not consumed by it, he had before his eyes a lively picture of God's people in this world.

As he stood there, staring at the burning bush, Moses must have thought about his brethren in Egypt. They were at that moment in a fiery furnace of affliction. But they would not be consumed by it! The church of the Lord Jesus is, in all ages, like a bush burning with the fires of affliction and trouble, opposition and persecution; yet thriving in the flames because of Christ's abiding presence and support. The furnace of affliction could not destroy the people of Israel because God had bound himself to them by covenant. And so it is with us (John 16:33; Isaiah 43:1-2).

(John 16:33) "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

(Isaiah 43:1-2) "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. (2) When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

GOD'S CHARACTER

Moses was a believer. He had left Egypt 40 years earlier in faith. He knew God, and knew much about him.

- He knew the One who spoke to him out of the bush.
- He knew about God's promise to Eve.
- He knew about God's covenant with Abraham.
- He knew about God's promise to deliver Egypt.
- He knew that the centerpiece of all God's purpose, work, covenants, and relations with men was the woman's promised Seed.

But no one ever knows God completely and perfectly, though some seem to think they do! Moses still had much to learn; and we do too.

What did this bush reveal about God? It certainly revealed something of **his sovereign power**, the power by which he rules and overrules even what we call "the laws of nature." — Here is a dry thorn bush burning with fire, but unconsumed by the fire! — Here is fire without heat!

The bush also revealed something of **God's self-sufficiency** as God. God himself, like that bush, is never used up. — His strength is never depleted. — His wisdom is never diminished. — His grace is never lessened. — He is sufficient for us!

- The Widow's Barrel and Cruise
- Paul (2 Cor. 12)

As Moses watched the burning bush, he heard **God's call**.

(Exodus 3:4) “And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I.”

As the Lord later spoke to Samuel in the temple and to Mary at the tomb, here he called Moses by name and Moses heard his voice (John 10:3). What a great and gracious thing that is! Nothing is sweeter than special, distinguishing grace and special, personal manifestations of our Savior. These are things for which we constantly long. Are they not?

The bush also revealed something of **God’s great holiness**. As Moses began to approach the bush, the Angel of the Lord said, “*Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground*” (v. 5). God is of such a holy nature that the slightest particle of dirt from Moses’ shoes would contaminate that ground upon which he revealed himself. Taking off his shoes symbolized reverence and godly fear (Num. 5:1-3; Jos. 5:15).

(Numbers 5:1-3) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: (3) Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.”

(Joshua 5:15) “And the captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And Joshua did so.”

This word from God does not mean that we must not approach God. David says, “*it is good to draw nigh unto God.*” But it does mean that we cannot approach God, except in and through a Mediator (John 14:6). True, he is the God of all grace and all mercy, and God is love; but he is all these because he is holy; and he could never have manifested himself in all these blessed attributes of his Being, had it not been that in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ mercy and truth met together and righteousness and peace kissed each other. Until our feet are unshod, remembering the holiness of him with whom we have to do, we can never draw near unto him by faith in Christ.

GOD’S SALVATION

Then the Lord Jesus showed Moses that he is the eternal God, the God of covenant grace, by whom his people would be raised to everlasting life. He is the God of all grace who will assuredly save his people (v. 6).

(Exodus 3:6) “Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy 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 upon God.”

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all dead, yet God was, and is, and ever will be their God. He is the God of the living. That means that these men who had long ago died were really still alive and would live forever with, in, and by Christ. In a word, the Lord Jesus was saying to Moses, “*I*

am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). How vast the Word of God is! We could never have known the fulness of this single verse, had not our Savior used it to confound the Sadducees in Luke 20:37, affirming the resurrection of the dead in the last day. He who is the God of the living is the God who gives life to chosen sinners (John 5:25-28).

(John 5:25-28) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (26) For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; (27) And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice;”

In verse seven, we see a delightful picture of our great God and Savior’s great **compassion and pity** for us. In verse 6 our Savior reveals himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His own character is the foundation of all his works. His motive is always in himself. He always acts on the basis of what he is, not on the basis of what we are (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1: 3-6; 2 Tim. 1: 9-10). Grace is not God’s reaction to our need. Our need is but the background upon which he shows forth the glory of his grace. That is what we see in verse 7.

(Exodus 3:7) “And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;”

Our God repeats his assurances of mercy that we may be the more confident of his mercy (Heb. 6:17-19). What infinite tenderness! Our misery touches his heart, He knows our sorrows, and comes down to deliver us. — So “*God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Rom. 5:8.) — “*In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old*” (Isa. 63:9). How sweet, it is to hear the God of Glory call us, “*my people.*”

Look at verse 8, and you will see that what I said about the bush speaking of **Christ’s incarnation** is exactly what was intended by this typical vision.

(Exodus 3:8) “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.”

(Isaiah 63:4) “For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.”

The Lord Jesus actually came down into this world to bring us up to the heavenly Canaan. Read his precious and blessed promise — John. 14:1-3.

(John 14:1-3) “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (2) In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.”

There is nothing here between Egypt and Canaan. In Romans we read, “*Whom he justified, them he also glorified.*” In the mind and purpose of our God, there is nothing between our eternal redemption and everlasting glory.

Now, read verses 9-10.

(Exodus 3:9-10) “Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

The Holy Spirit gives the best commentary on this in Acts 7:35-36.

(Acts 7:35-36) “This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. (36) He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.”

Moses was sent to deliver Israel by the will of God. And he who was sent by God to deliver Israel out of Egypt, actually brought them out by mighty wonders. So it is with our blessed Savior. He was sent of God to save his people (Matt. 1:21). And he who was sent of God to save his people actually saved them by the mighty wonders he accomplished upon the cursed tree (Heb. 9:12). **He’s still doing it!** He is still saving sinners by the mighty wonders of his omnipotent, irresistible grace. — “*And so all Israel shall be saved!*”

APPLICATION

What does all this have to do with us? The burning bush speaks to us, just as it did to Moses, about the greatness of our God and the need to reverence him. Roger Ellsworth wrote...

“No truth is more urgently needed by the church. This is the day of easy and breezy familiarity with God. There seems to be little consciousness of how great God is and how unworthy we are.”

The burning bush tells us that the God of all grace ever sustains his elect. The fires of temptation, affliction, and adversity often burn in our lives. Indeed, as long as we are in this world, they will never cease. But the fires will never harm us in any way. Our God will bring all his people home to heaven in the perfection of holiness. Not one will be missing.

- As our Lord stooped to reveal himself in the thorn bush, so he stooped to take upon himself our nature.

He is God; yet he stooped to become a man. He is man; yet he is God over all and blessed forever. Were he not God, his blood could not atone for our sins. Were he not man, he had no blood with which to atone. Someone once said, “God could not suffer and man could not satisfy; but the God-man has both suffered and satisfied.” — *“Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”*

- As fire burned in the bush, so the fire of divine justice burned in the body and soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he died as our Substitute.
- Yet, as the fire could not destroy the bush, so Christ was not destroyed by his sufferings and death. but arose triumphantly over death, hell, and the grave, as Lord over all.

The Son of God, our all-glorious Christ, went to the cross for the express purpose of redeeming sinners. Now, having accomplished eternal redemption for us, he freely receives and saves forever all who come to God by him. Trust him as Savior, and you will never experience the wrath and judgment of God yourself (Rom. 8:1). Oh, may God be pleased to make this *“the mountain of God”* for your soul tonight, for Christ’s sake.

Amen.