

EXODUS 3:1-6 (STANDING ON HOLY GROUND)

Introduction: There are times when I struggle to fill up an evaluation of a passage to make an entire sermon. You know I'm not one to add a lot of fluff. Rather I want to give you insights into what God is telling us and let you add the fluff in later with your own thoughts.

But then there are times when I have to cut so much from what I want to say that I cringe. Today's six verses are that way. There simply isn't enough space in a single sermon to cover it all and even then we'll be a little long.

I started to accumulate the material last year on September 10th when my Israeli friend Sergio sent me an email about these verses. I saved it and it is a part of what we'll look into. I hope you love the details, because today is a sermon of details. No.fluff.for.you.

Text Verse: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..." Ephesians 1:7

Paul, writing to the Gentile church, says that we have redemption through the blood of Christ. If Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles, then what about the Jews. Are they included in this only individually, never to be considered as a united group again? Or is this period of the Gentiles temporary until God again sets His attention on Israel?

Does the Bible give us hints into these things as to which is correct and why? The answer is an obvious "Yes." The Bible is replete with both pictures of what is coming, as well as explicit prophetic references to it. All we have to do research what He is telling us and it will all come out as He intends.

Today's verses show us yet another picture of a period of time which is future to us even now when God will return His attention to His wayward people, Israel. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Tending to the Flock (verse 1)

1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.

We've seen beautiful patterns of history so far revealed in the first two chapters of Exodus. There was the time of Israel's rejection of Christ, just as Moses was rejected by his people. We saw the Church Age after that in the seven daughters of Reuel.

Now we are seeing the time when God is getting ready to redeem Israel and bring them out of their place of hardship and bondage, leading them into the kingdom age. Matthew Henry clued into this pattern in part when he said the following -

"The years of Moses's life are remarkably divided into three forties; the first forty he spent as a prince in Pharaoh's court, the second a shepherd in Midian, the third a king in Jeshurun." Matthew Henry

Israel has not been forgotten by Him and their period of trial and testing after exile will come to an end. It is pictured in Moses' next portion of life in which the call to that life begins to be seen in today's passage.

Christ is at this time in redemptive history our Good Shepherd, leading the flocks of the church from the Place of Judgment, pictured by Moses tending to flocks in Midian, which means exactly that. Here is Moses, tending to the flocks, but immediately we have a new name - Jethro.

He is identified as Moses' father-in-law and the priest of Midian. However, scholars debate as to whether this is the same man as Reuel or not. The term for "father-in-law" is also used to describe other marital relations, such as son-in-law, brother-in-law, etc.

Some argue that if Reuel was older when Moses married his daughter 40 years earlier, then this may be his son or nephew who has become the priest in his place. Without getting bogged down in that, what the account asks us to do is determine the meaning of his name, not really how he is now related to Moses.

Reuel means "Friend of God" and he was used to picture the corporate body of people from whom the collective church is derived. As the seven churches are the friends of God, they willingly invited Jesus into their abode, just as Reuel willingly called Moses into his.

Now we have a new figure - or at least a new name, Jethro. This comes from the word yatar which means "to remain over," or "to be at rest." The HAW Theological Wordbook submits, "It refers to one portion of a quantity which has been divided. Generally it is the smaller part and sometimes it is the part of least quality."

Therefore, Abarim translates the name Jethro as "remnant." If Reuel was there to picture the time of the church age, then Jethro must be introduced for another reason. If the church age is ending and God is ready to restore Israel to its inherited place in redemptive history, then this name must be tied to that.

This word yatar, from which Jethro is derived, is used in Ruth 2:18 concerning the food which Ruth had kept back for her mother-in-law Naomi. There it said, "So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied."

That was a transfer of food from a Gentile to her Jewish mother-in-law. That story, if you know it's meaning, showed Naomi as picturing Israel in captivity awaiting their restoration, which came at the end of the story. This word yatar, is also used in this set of verses from Ezekiel 39 -

"When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, 28 then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. 29 And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord God." Ezekiel 39:27-29

A study on this word time and again gives hidden clues of the return of Israel to the land and to its exalted place as chief among the nations in the end times. It is fitting then that the name Jethro is introduced after Reuel.

There is the church age and then there is the restoration of the remnant of God's people, Israel - pictured by Jethro. Seemingly unimportant names actually bear directly on what is about to transpire and what will continue to occur, even thousands of years later. Every detail fits like a God-manufactured glove, perfectly aligning with His redemptive plan.

1 (con't) And he led the flock to the back of the desert,

It is here in this portion of verse 1 that my friend Sergio emailed me with questions concerning the passage. The words "to the back of the desert" are akhar ha'midbar. Akhar means "behind," or "the following part." It is also translated as "west" and this is how some translate it. The second word, ha'midbar, means "the desert."

In the Hebrew way of dividing the points of the compass, if the east is before a person, the west then is behind him. The south would then be right and the north would be to the left. The east is a place of exile. When Adam was kicked out of the garden, it was to the east that the cherub was placed to guard against entry.

When the tabernacle was erected, cherubim were woven into the veil which then pointed east, symbolizing restricted entry into the Holy of Holies. When Moses died, he was buried east of Canaan as punishment for his transgression. And when Israel was exiled to Babylon, it was east. The east wind is used many times in Scripture as a harsh and destroying concept. This is seen for example in Jeremiah 18:17 -

"I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy;
I will show them the back and not the face
In the day of their calamity."

And so more than a year before typing this sermon, in September 2013, Sergio emailed me with this comment -

"Interesting verse: there is a pattern in the bible of 'going east' is usually judgment and exile (east of Eden, east of Israel to Babylon, east wind...) but in this

verse, right before Moses is called to lead the nation of Israel out of 'exile' he led his flock to the west to the mountain of God..."

He was specifically asking about what this was picturing. I was too busy with life to get to it, but now a year later, here we are. Understanding the pictures which have been drawn out from the preceding passages, what do you think it's picturing? I have an idea and will share it at the end of the verse.

1 (con't) and came to Horeb,

Horeb is the same area as Sinai. The names are used to indicate the same place, but the words are selected to be used for different reasons when they are, in fact, used. Horeb means "Arid" or "Desert" which, interestingly, is similar to Zion, the mountain of God, which in one sense means "Dry Place."

1 (con't) the mountain of God.

Once again, every single translation I read failed to properly note what this says. In Hebrew, it says el har ha'elohim - "to mountain 'the' God." The definite article is before "God" not "mountain." This is showing us something and it is specific and particular.

If it was the mountain of God, it would have said har elohim, such as in Psalm 68:15. Rather, it is the mountain of "the" God. It is intended to show us that the flock is being taken to a specific location to worship the One true God.

Later, in chapter 4, we will be told that Moses returns to Jethro, but the flock is not mentioned. This is the first and last time it is referred to. What is that

picturing? Before I explain this and we go on, I'd like to continue with Sergio's thoughts from a year ago -

Charlie - The translations are a bit off.. quite a bit actually. you are correct: Ahar means 'after/behind' (time / location), together with the following word it forms "after desert" (ahar ha-midbar). So location wise if he was east of mt Horeb and it's desert then he would be going west. But here's another interesting point (most likely way overstretched...) -> the sentence in hebrew goes like this: Ve-inhag et ha-tson ahar ha-midbar ve-yavo el har-elohim horba what's interesting is that the word "midbar" means word/mouth - for example "dabar elohim" (God's word). so the sentence could be read like this: And [he] drove the herd [of sheep] according to the words and [he] came to the mountain of God, Horeb

And then Sergio finished with the thought, "probably changes nothing..." Sergio, it changes everything. The dual meaning of the verse is showing us a picture of something. Sergio's thoughts are confirmed by another translator concerning "word" instead of "desert" and so I have all the confidence in the world that this isn't stretching a thing. Abarim states the following concerning the root words of the word dabar -

"These two root-verbs are really quite adjacent in Hebrew thought. Note that the word מדבר (midbar) means wilderness (or desert), and the related verb דבר (dabar) means to speak. When Paul augments Isaiah's spiritual armor, he adds the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ... Words commonly protrude from one's mouth, and the mouth is typically a wet place, not a dry place. But it should be noted that the Meribah incident occurred at Horeb (Exodus 17:6), "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink."

This may sound like way too much information, but let's look it over. The pictures have shown that Israel is in exile and it is now the church age. Suddenly, with

almost no information in 40 years of his life being given to us, we suddenly come to the end of the 40 years. And Moses is heading west with his flocks.

If east is exile and from whence comes destruction, and the flocks are being led west, then it is to a place of safety and from whence comes life. Horeb means "Arid" or "Desert," just as Zion means "Dry Place." It seems curious that the mountain of "the" God would be defined this way, but what is it that gives life? Water.

The word proceeds from the wet place, the mouth, and the Word of God is where the water of life issues from. Horeb, as Abraim noted, is where the water from the rock came from. Paul in the New Testament say this about that account -

"...all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." 1 Corinthians 10:3, 4

So is anyone seeing it yet? In the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Mount Zion (remember Zion means "Dry Place") where does the water proceed from? From the throne of God and the Lamb. Anyone seeing it yet? Here is Sergio's translation again - "And [he] drove the herd [of sheep] according to the words and [he] came to the mountain of God, Horeb."

Who does Moses picture? Christ Jesus. "And Christ drove the herd according to the word and came to the mountain of the God, even to Horeb." Have you got it? What is the passage showing us? It is the transition from the Church Age to the time where Israel will be redeemed from Egypt.

What does it say in 1 Thessalonians 4 concerning the end of the church age? Here is the passage -

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

This transition verse is given, and I am completely convinced of this, to show us the end of the church age at the rapture; at the word of the Lord. Without abusing either the text, the Hebrew, or the concepts which permeate Scripture concerning Israel and the dispensational model, we can paraphrase the words, "And (Christ) drove the flock (the church) according to the word, and (they) came to the mountain of THE God, even Horeb."

O God, we wait for You to send Your Son for us

To guide us safely home to His side

And forever we will be with Jesus

As we walk in heaven's expanse so wide

Thank You for this wondrous and sure promise, O God

We praise You for You have done such marvelous things for us

And as we praise You now, ever shall we when in heaven we tread

Glorifying You for our precious Lamb, our beloved Lord Jesus

II. The Burning Bush (verse 2 & 3)

2 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire

From this point on, the Church Age is over. A new direction takes place and the coming passage is given in preparation for the great workings of God ahead as He delivers Israel from their bondage. The Lord will now reveal Himself to Moses in one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture. Stephen refers to this incident in his speech to the elders of Israel in Acts 7. Here are his words to them -

“And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. 31 When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, 32 saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ Acts 7:30-32

From his words, we know that forty full years have passed. Again, we should review the meaning of the number forty so that we understand why this period of Moses' life was chosen. In his book, *Number in Scripture*, EW Bullinger says that forty is associated, "with a period of probation, trial, and chastisement." He further refines it to be a "chastisement of sons, and of a covenant people."

The second period of 40 years has ended and the second time of probation, trial, and chastisement is now over. This is specifically referred to by Isaiah where he wrote this -

“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!”

Says your God.

“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,

That her warfare is ended,
That her iniquity is pardoned;
For she has received from the Lord's hand
Double for all her sins." Isaiah 40:1, 2

Now is the time for the captives to be released. Now is the time for Israel to be exalted. In this verse there is no definite article in front of the word "Angel" but it is not necessary. There is only one Jehovah who will call out to Moses from this bush, and so translators rightly call Him "the Angel of the Lord."

And so the Angel of the Lord appears to Moses in a flame of fire. The word for "flame" here is labbah and is used only this once in the Bible. However, it comes from the word lehabah which is a common word for flame, but it also means "blade."

To us, flames of fire appear like the blades of a sword and so the two concepts merge into one. The voice of the Lord is equated to flames of fire in the 29th Psalm, and the tongue is equated to a sword in Revelation 19. And so the two concepts unite in this bush.

2 (con't) from the midst of a bush.

There are lots of bushes in the world, and there were certainly lots of bushes around Moses, and yet there is a definite article in front of the word "bush." Only Young's Literal Translation got this correct by stating "the" bush. It is specifically designating a specific bush and so it does it dishonor to say "a" bush.

This word for "bush" in Hebrew is seneh and it is only used six times in the Bible. It means "thorny." Five of those times are right here in Exodus 3 and the final time is in Deuteronomy 33 when referring to the Lord who dwelt in this bush.

The New Testament refers to it four times, twice by Jesus and twice by Stephen. It is the word from which Sinai is derived which means "Bush of the Lord." Although there are no commentaries on this and it is my speculation, the seneh or thorny bush, which is the basis for the name Sinai, Bush of the Lord, may be the very type of bush that was used for a crown of thorns on Christ's head.

The six times it is used in the Old Testament may be tied to the meaning of the number six, the number which relates to man. And therefore it is pointing to the Person of Jesus in His Manhood. As the Lord dwelt in the Bush in the Old Testament, he wore it as a crown of thorns in the New. Just speculation, but possible.

2 (con't) So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire,

This certainly caught Moses' attention. Any fire, particularly in a bush, would be visible from some distance. In the Bible, fire itself has a dual signification. First, it is something which destroys. It is often used as a symbol of judgment and wrath because of this.

However, fire also has the ability to purify, and it is often used this way as well in Scripture. In Malachi 3, it is used in this dual way. It is speaking of the coming of the Lord in judgment and yet at the same time to purify -

“But who can endure the day of His coming?

And who can stand when He appears?

For He is like a refiner's fire
And like launderers' soap.
3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the Lord
An offering in righteousness. Malachi 3:2, 3

Therefore, fire is a picture of the jealous desire of the Lord. He is Jealous. He is jealous in love for His people, and yet He is jealous for His holy name. The fire will purify people and yet it will destroy people as well. This is seen in the continuation of verse 2...

2 (con't) but the bush was not consumed.

The bush wasn't consumed in the fire and thus it is not something set in contrast to the Lord, but rather it is a representation of the work of Lord Himself. Israel is being prepared for purification and yet as a whole, they will not be consumed. Likewise, God's divine judgment on Egypt will be poured out at the same time.

In the same way, Israel of the future is prophetically being pictured just as Malachi and the other prophets show us. They will be purified and yet not totally consumed. At the same time, God's judgment and wrath will come upon the world.

3 Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight,

Here we're given another indication that Moses is the true author of the account. Rather than it being in his immediate area, whether on the path he was on or whether right where he was standing, he says he will "turn aside" in order to see the great sight. And great it must have seemed, and for good reason...

3 (con't) why the bush does not burn."

If you're in a dry and aired land, a bush that caught on fire may still be unusual, but a bush that was on fire and didn't jump into a large blaze and almost as quickly die down would be astonishing. Things in such a place are dry and brittle and would be consumed in a moment; in a flash.

But this bush continued to burn after it's expected time was over. There in the bush, the Lord patiently waited for Moses' curiosity to take over, and eventually it did. But even more amazing things will happen in regards to this bush - life changing things; world-changing things.

The fire of the Lord will go out in splendor

It will purify the people who bear His holy name

But on the unrepentant, judgment and wrath it will render

Two purposes are accomplished with His burning flame

Great and awesome is the marvelous sight

Of the work of the Lord, both His judgment and His grace

What a marvelous display of His infinite might

Blessed is the Lord in His throne's holy place
It is a wonderful blessing to behold the works of the Lord
Which are written for us in His superior word

III. Standing On Holy Ground (verses 4-6)

There is a form of Bible scholarship, a very confused and theologically inept form of Bible scholarship, known as the Documentary Hypothesis. It suggests that the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, was actually derived from four independent sources, not from one.

It has become the standard in most liberal circles in order to try to reconcile, as they say, "perceived inconsistencies in the biblical text." In other words, these scholars see only contradiction, confusion, and error in the Bible. And so instead of researching how to resolve the difficulties from a biblical perspective, they do so from a man-centered perspective.

They divide the books of Moses into four separate authors - J or Jehovahist, E or Elohist, D or Deuteronomist, and P for Priestly. Line by line, they cut up the Bible claiming this person wrote this line and this person added in this line. However, verse 4 of Exodus 3, along with many other evidences, shows how utterly ridiculous this type of theology is.

4 So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush

In one verse it says, "the Lord" meaning Jehovah, and God or elohim." One cannot ascribe this verse to J, nor can they ascribe it to E. If they used the same term in both places originally, then anyone who revised it would have revised both.

Liberal theology is both ungodly and perverse, and it is also about as stupid as one can get. We are given an insight into the nature of God in this verse, not an insanely convoluted look into the work of some crazy Jews who lived many hundreds of years later.

Jehovah saw and God called. The Lord is God. As the Lord, He is the monitor of the covenant within Creation, and as God, He is the one "over there" who controls all of creation. Interestingly, I checked for fun and found that the Lord is mentioned 7 times in this chapter, God 21, and the combined term Lord God 3.

Thus you have 3, 7, and 21 which is a multiple of 7×3 . The stamp of divine perfection permeates the words recorded here, not a confused grouping of irrelevant words. God calling to Moses from the bush shows that an objective reality, not a mere vision, is being described. The Lord is visibly and audibly present with Moses.

4 (con't) and said, "Moses, Moses!"

Calling out a name or a word twice is a way of showing emphasis. When Jesus wanted to emphasize his words, He would say "Amen. Amen," or as we often say it "Verily, Verily." When the Jews wanted Jesus done away with, they shouted "Crucify! Crucify!"

When God calls out to one of His people for a matter of the utmost importance, He will call out their name twice. This happens to be the third time in Scripture that God has fondly and purposefully called out to a man in this fashion. The first time was in Genesis 22 when the Angel of the Lord called to the man of faith -

"But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!'" Genesis 22:11

The second time was in Genesis 46 when God called out to the man of family -

"Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, 'Jacob, Jacob!'" Genesis 46:2

And now, in the same climatic and emphatic fashion, God calls out the name of the man of the flock, "Mosheh, Mosheh."

4 (con't)And he said, "Here I am."

When the Angel of the Lord called out to Abraham with emphatic purpose, Abraham's immediate (and much relieved) response was "Here I am." When God called out to Jacob in His emphatic and comforting way, Jacob's response was "Here I am."

Now, the same powerful voice with the same emphatic call goes out unto Moses' ears and his immediate response is "Here I am." When the Lord calls to you, be it audibly or deep within the recesses of your soul, make sure to respond as these great men of God did - "Here I am."

Moses didn't see anyone around with a box of matches. There was no one standing around him to produce the call of his name, and there was no motion except the continuously burning flames which didn't harm the bush. Moses knew this was a divine visitation and his response reflected it - "Here I am."

5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place.

Moses was probably curious about the fire that didn't consume, wanting to see if it was really fire or not. And the welcoming voice which called to him certainly seemed to be no threat. It knew him personally and so it must be a friend at hand.

And so in a manner of curiosity and feeling welcomed, he stepped forward, not realizing that a distance was demanded between him and the great sight before him which he beheld.

5 (con't) Take your sandals off your feet,

Not only was a distance required, but he was further instructed to remove his sandals. There is much to learn about shoes, their use, and their removal in the Bible. And this is true even though they are only mentioned about 35 times.

In this command, and it is a command, God is instructing Moses from One who is greater to one who is lesser. In essence, "Resign yourself to me." He is the possessor of, and in authority over, the land. Moses' shoes, whether made by him or by someone else, were the work of man's hands. The footprints of Moses were created by God, implying God's mastery over him.

There is then a uniting of the created foot with the dust from which it was created. Nothing of human origin would be considered acceptable in the presence of such a place of holiness. This is seen later in Exodus 20 which says –

"And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it." Exodus 20:25

God made the stones, not man. If man's efforts are placed along with God's holiness, only defilement can take place. God calls, God sanctifies, and God glorifies. The process of holiness is "of and by God and God alone."

Only twice in the Bible is someone told to take off their shoes because the ground is holy. This is the first and the second is in Joshua. To understand this better, that account needs to also be given -

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, 'Are You for us or for our adversaries?'

14 So He said, 'No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.'

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?'

15 Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so." Joshua 5:13-15

When two things, or two similar occurrences, are noted in the Bible, there is a reason for it. There will be a contrast of the two and yet they will confirm something. In the case of these two accounts, one is before Israel is delivered from bondage; one is after they have been safely led into the land of promise. He is the covenant keeping Lord.

One is outside of Canaan, one is in Canaan. The Lord is God over the whole earth - over both Jew and Gentile. In one there is the Lord unseen and the voice of God from "over there." In the other, there is the Lord visible, tangible, and in human form. The Lord is the incarnate Word of God; He is Jesus.

In one, He is the Lord who will give the Law - the Angel or Messenger of it; in the other He is the Lord who defends the Law which is given - the Commander of the Lord's army. He is the Lord of the Law; it's herald and upholder. For these, and certainly other reasons, we are given these two accounts to compare and ponder.

5 (con't) for the place where you stand is holy ground."

The word for "holy" here is qodesh. This is the very first time it is used in the Bible. So far, over 2500 years of human history have been recorded, and yet this is the first mention of anything connected to God's holiness since the creation.

A parallel word to qodesh is qadash which means to sanctify. That has been used just once in the Bible thus far, in the creation account in Genesis 2:3 where it says "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." From this point on, the two terms will cumulatively be used about 640 times in the Old Testament.

The holiness of God is being introduced now because this man of God and son of Levi will become the human mediator of God's law for His chosen people. He is being taught right now a lesson of God's holiness which he will carry with him all the days of his life.

He will even see on many occasions what it means to step over the bounds of propriety concerning that state of holiness in His Creator and Lord. This will be seen in others, both within the covenant community and without, and it will be seen in himself as well.

His final resting place will be outside of the Land of Promise because he will fail to take it to heart during a brief moment of anger. The account is found in Numbers 20 -

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?' 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'

13 This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them." Numbers 20:10-13

Here though, Moses now stands on holy ground, or literally "ground of holiness" for the first time. It is ground which has been rendered holy by the presence of God upon it. Let us remember this ourselves as we conduct our affairs in His presence.

6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

The word "father" here is singular, not plural. This then indicates first that he is identifying himself with the same God of Amram, Moses' father, but whom was also worshipped by the patriarchs before him.

However, in Acts 7, Stephen says it in the plural. He focused on the combined patriarchs for the benefit of the council. Why would this be? It is because Stephen was addressing the Jews. But there is more than the Jews in God's plans. Abraham was the father of Isaac and Ishmael.

Isaac was the father of Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the father of the twelve patriarchs as well as the adoptive father of Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim

would become the "fullness of the Gentiles" as Jacob prophesied. And therefore, the entire scope of humanity is included in the words to Moses now.

Paul explains this in Galatians 3 when he says that we become sons of Abraham by faith. Yes, He is the God of the Hebrews, but He is God of all creation and over all mankind, be they from Ishmael, Esau, Ephraim, or any other group of people. If they call on Christ, they become sons of Abraham by faith and sons of God through adoption.

6 (con't)And Moses hid his face,

Two commands were given to Moses - "Do not draw near this place," and "Take your sandals off your feet." Now, in an expression of over-awed dread, Moses adds in a third aspect of man in the holy God's presence. He hides his face from His glory.

He suddenly has an insight into God that he had never before contemplated, one which Jesus later explained to the leaders of Israel when He said -

"But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him." Luke 20:37,38

The expression, "the God of Abraham" enlightened Moses to the fact that his fathers, even to Abraham, continued to exist. God can only be the God of that which exists, not of things which don't exist. And therefore He is the God over time and outside of time, eternal and unchanging.

When God reveals Himself in such wondrous ways, the only thing one can do is hide his face. Elijah found this out on this same mountain many years later when he wrapped his face in a mantle at the call of God.

Even the Seraphim of God, the burning ones, are said to hide their face before His presence. When one truly comprehends the holiness of God, it is so far above the five senses that the only reaction to seeing it is that of fear...

***6 (fin) for he was afraid to look upon God.**

Again, the translation is lacking. It says yare mehabbit ha'elohim - "He was afraid to look at 'the' God." The definite article shows the sudden and overwhelming realization of Moses that he is in the presence of "the" God; the one, true, and only God.

He had left the land of many gods, Egypt. Then for many years he lived in Midian, but now he is suddenly found to be in the presence of "the" God and he is in fear to look upon Him. In the future, he will talk face to face with Him, and the glory will be such that it will continue to reflect off his own face.

He will have to veil it from the people because of their own fear at the glory which they will see radiating off of him. Such is the splendor and the glory of the God who rules over time, space, and matter. His glory is infinite and He is holy.

Someday all flesh will come before Him for judgment. On that day, those who are not covered in the righteousness of Christ will be consumed by what their eyes will behold. With that memory forever in their mind, they will be cast from His presence for all eternity. There they will suffer the pain of what their eyes had beheld in relation to their fallen state. It will eternally consume them, it will infinitely destroy them.

But God gives us hope and He gives us a choice. He graciously grants us terms of peace and purification from the sins we bear. It is found in the giving of His Son, Jesus. Through Christ, we can be restored to a propitiously perfect peace with God, covered by His blood and reckoned pure and holy because of it. Let me explain to you how this can happen for you...

Closing Verse: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!" Isaiah 6:3

Next Week: Exodus 3:7-12 (The Call of Moses) (7th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Standing on Holy Ground

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro
His father-in-law, the priest of Midian, you know

And he led the flock
To the back of the desert he did trod
And came to Horeb
To the mountain of God

And the Angel of the Lord

Appeared to him in a flame
Of fire from the midst of a bush
To his eyes this wondrous sight came

So he looked, and behold
The bush was burning with fire
But the bush was not consumed
It certainly made his mind inquire

Then Moses said, "I will now
Turn aside and see this great sight
Why the bush does not burn somehow
And yet it gives off the fire's light

So when the Lord saw
That he turned aside to see
God called to him from the midst of the bush
And said, "Moses, Moses!" And "Here I am" said he

Then He said, "Do not draw near this place
Take your sandals off your feet
For the place where you stand is holy ground
Where you and I now meet

Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob too
And Moses hid his face for he was afraid
To look upon God and so He kept Him from his view

How do we treat God, as a friend? Yes it is so
And yet He is also our Lord to whom honor is due
We can be friendly with God because of Jesus, you know
But we should do so with His holiness in view

Let us honor Him and thus grant to Him glory
And to Him let respect and praise come from each of us
As we hail the Lamb who is the center of the gospel story
With resounding shouts of praise to our magnificent Lord, Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...