



The years of slavery were long and grueling as God's chosen people endured oppression in Egypt. Their sons were massacred. The people groaned in desperation for help.

Meanwhile, a few hundred miles away, Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep when he saw an unusual sight – a bush that was on fire but not being burned up. When Moses turned aside to investigate, the angel of the LORD – God Himself – called out to him from the midst of the bush, telling Moses to return to Egypt as His chosen instrument to deliver His people from their oppression.

Overwhelmed with questions and doubts, Moses pushed back, reluctant to accept the assignment. But God assured him of His presence and promised to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and take them to the Promised Land.

While Moses is a prominent character in this chapter, this particular scene, however, isn't primarily about Moses – it's about God. God, who hears and knows the afflictions of His people. God, who comes down and sends a deliverer to set them free. God, who is faithful to fulfill all His promises.

Throughout the rest of Scripture, the Exodus serves as a picture of God's salvation of people enslaved to sin. Rather than inserting ourselves into this story as Moses, searching for our own "burning bush moment", we should see our place in the story as the Israelites who are enslaved and oppressed, crying out for help and deliverance. And like the Israelites, God heard our cry and sent a greater Moses, Jesus, to save us from our sins.

Their story is our story, but the bigger story is God's. It is the story of how He saves His people.¹⁴

ICEBREAKER

What's the most unusual thing you've ever seen that made you stop and take a second look?

¹⁴ Author's Note.

READ IT

Read Exodus 3:1-22

EXPLORE IT

1. What first captures Moses' attention, and what causes him to turn aside to investigate? (vv. 1–3)
2. How does God identify Himself to Moses, and how does Moses respond? (vv. 4–6)
3. What reasons does God give for intervening on behalf of Israel? (vv. 7–10)
4. What concerns or objections does Moses raise when God calls him? (vv. 11–13)
5. How does God answer Moses' questions and reassure him? (vv. 12–17)
6. What does God tell Moses will happen in the future? (vv. 18–22)

APPLY IT

In Exodus 2:24, we read that God heard the people's groaning, He remembered His covenant, He saw the sons of Israel in their slavery, and He knew them. Then in Exodus 3:7, God tells Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings." In case Moses missed it, God repeats (v. 9) that He has heard the people's cry and seen their oppression.

Why did God wait hundreds of years while Israel suffered before He delivered them? As we've seen, one reason was God's patience and mercy: the iniquity of the Amorite was not yet complete (Gen. 15:16). He allowed His people to suffer in bondage while He patiently withheld judgment on the corrupt Canaanites. There may have been other reasons that we don't know. His timing is not our timing. But we should never conclude that God's silence when we suffer implies that He doesn't hear our cry for help or that He doesn't care. As someone has said, "Never interpret God's love by your circumstances. Rather, interpret your circumstances by His love." We can't serve God effectively if we doubt His goodness, love, and care for us and for others.¹⁵

7. **God promised Abraham that Israel would spend 400 years in a foreign land before He delivered them (Genesis 15:13–16). What does this teach us about God's timing and His faithfulness when His promises seem delayed?**

8. **What truths about God's character in Exodus 3 give you confidence that He has not forgotten you, even when your circumstances haven't changed?**

¹⁵ Steven J. Cole, "How God Saves His People, Part 1 (Exodus 3:1–22)," *Bible.org*, February 18, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-how-god-saves-his-people-part-1-exodus-31-22>.

“Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Here we join Moses on holy ground! This is one of the most profound and mysterious revelations of God in Scripture! “I am who I am” is related in Hebrew to the four consonants that are probably pronounced “Yahweh.” (Most modern translations use Lord in small caps.) This is God’s personal covenant name, which He used in establishing His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15). God’s name represents His person, character, authority, power, and reputation (Walter Kaiser, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Zondervan], ed. by Frank E. Gaebeline, 2:321). He is the personal God of our salvation, with whom we can have a relationship. It refers to His absolute independence (C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* [Eerdmans], 1:75). He exists by Himself without the need of anyone else. It points to His absolute constancy and consistency (ibid.): He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). It reveals His self-existence: He is uncaused; and to His eternality: there never has been a time when He was not and never will be a time when He ceases to be. F. B. Meyer wrote (*Devotional Commentary on Exodus* [Kregel], p. 53):

There is no was or will be with Him, but always the present tense. All that He was to the fathers, He is today; and all that He will be to their children, He is now. Nothing to learn: nothing to acquire: nothing to become. He alone is Reality, as contrasted with the vanities of heathen deities.¹⁶

9. When God reveals Himself as "I AM," what truths about His character become clear from this passage?

10. Jesus claimed to be the great "I AM" and then described Himself as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine. What do these statements reveal about who Jesus is?

¹⁶ Cole, “How God Saves His People, Part 1.”

In Exodus 3:8, God tells Moses what He (God) intends to do: “So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.” God did that literally for the Israelites who had been enslaved in Egypt for centuries.

But He does that spiritually for those who are enslaved to sin. As Paul says (Col. 1:13-14), “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” That’s the best news in the world!¹⁷

11. What are some characteristics of a life lived in slavery to sin compared to a life lived in the freedom Christ provides?

12. Read Romans 6:15–23. Paul contrasts being “slaves of sin” with being “slaves of righteousness.” What does it mean to become a slave to righteousness, and how is that different from the freedom the world often promises?

¹⁷ Steven J. Cole, “How God Saves His People, Part 2 (Exodus 3:1–22),” *Bible.org*, February 25, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-how-god-saves-his-people-part-2-exodus-31-22>.

13. God already knew Pharaoh would resist, yet He also promised Israel would be delivered. What does this teach us about God's control over both obstacles and outcomes?

14. God doesn't promise Moses an easy mission, but a successful one. How does this distinction shape your evangelistic efforts today?

15. Pharaoh's resistance was part of God's plan, not a sign that God's plan was failing. How does that truth encourage you when following Christ is difficult or you face opposition?

19 of 27

But the Lord promised Moses that this time, he would succeed. After God struck Egypt with the plagues, finally Pharaoh would let Israel go. And they wouldn't go out emptyhanded. Every woman would ask of her neighbor articles of silver, gold, and clothing, so that Israel would "plunder the Egyptians" (Exod. 3:22). This was exactly what God had promised Abraham (Gen. 15:14), "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."¹⁹

- 16. God promised Israel they would not leave Egypt empty-handed. How does our future inheritance in Christ far exceed the treasures Israel was to carry out of Egypt?**

- 17. How should the promise of God's "immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7) shape the way we live and what we treasure today?**

¹⁹ Cole, "How God Saves His People, Part 2."