

International Sunday School Lesson Study Notes

Lesson Text: Exodus 3:7-17

Lesson Title: Preparation for Deliverance

Introduction

As we come to our lesson text in Exodus 3, the Hebrew people have been in bondage in Egypt for over 400 years. Thus the Book of Exodus opens with the words, *"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph"* (Exodus 1:8). Joseph had been the rescuer of Egypt during the years of famine. Within a generation or two after Jacob, Joseph's father died, Joseph was forgotten. Although *"the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them"* (Exodus 1:7), they were still slaves in a foreign land.

Part of God's promise to Abraham was that his *"...seed shall be a stranger in a land that was not theirs"* and that they would be afflicted for *"four hundred years"* (Genesis 15:13). God also promised Abraham that He would *"judge"* that nation and that when He delivered them from that nation that they would *"come out with great substance"* (Genesis 15:14). On the surface it doesn't look very encouraging for God's people. The Egyptians have forgotten Joseph and the Hebrews had forgotten God's promises. Apparently no one in Abraham's family or in Egypt was keeping track of the time, but God was. And it was time for deliverance!

One part of preparation for deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egypt is the arrival of a deliverer. Moses was born during a dangerous time for Hebrew babies. Because of the increased population of Hebrew children Pharaoh and the Egyptians felt threatened (Exodus 1:9-10). Pharaoh didn't just want to use the Hebrews as slaves; he wanted to use them up and destroy their national identity and the Jewish race. His solution, kill the next generation of male Hebrews. And Moses was a part of that generation.

As always, Satan's plan backfired and instead of Moses being drown in the Nile River like the other Hebrew male babies (Exodus 1:22), God protected him from death (Exodus 2:3-10). In fact, God so designed it that Pharaoh's daughter found

Moses floating on the river in the little ark his mother had prepared for him and she took him for her own son. In God's providential grace and wisdom Pharaoh's daughter hired Moses' sister and mother to take care of him (Exodus 2:7-10). God brought Moses the deliverer into the world, let Pharaoh pay for his upkeep and education, and then used Moses to deliver God's people from the hand of Pharaoh!

In Exodus 2:9, Moses was three months old. In Exodus 2:10-11, forty years have passed and Moses is a grown man. It would take another forty years of living in the wilderness with God before Moses would be ready to deliver God's people. Those years of preparation rested upon the burning bush experience in Exodus 3 which is the heart of our study today.

God and His People (Exodus 3:7-9)

Verse 7-8a

"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; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians..."

Out of the burning bush God begins to speak to His servant Moses. "*God called unto him*" (Exodus 3:4) and "the LORD said" are significant words. We have no record of God's speaking to Moses during his four decades in the wilderness. He heard no voice, received no messages from God during the long and lonely days of keeping his father-in-law's sheep. But now God breaks the silence with the words, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Those are powerful names by which to open a conversation with Moses. God was saying, "Moses, I'm the God of men who like you have made mistakes and failures. But I'm still your God."

Notice four powerful phrases in these verses. *First*, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt..." God wanted Moses to know He had been watching the situation closely. Second, "and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters..." God not only saw but He "heard their cry." Every moan, every groan, every brokenhearted sob and falling tear was heard and noticed by God. Third, "for I know their sorrows" means God knew exactly where they were in life. He knew and felt what they were feeling and experiencing. The Egyptian didn't know and didn't care. Moses might have cared but he couldn't exactly know what the Hebrew's were going through. But God did. And He knows about everything pertaining to you. Fourth, "And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." There is no perhaps or maybe about God's promise

here. He is going to "deliver." God is a God purpose. He wants Moses to know that He is not just making decisions as things happen but He has a sovereign plan before they happen. God has "come down to deliver," and "deliver" He will. The rescue of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's descendants is now in motion!

Note: Keep in mind at this point that Moses is simply listening and learning. He has no clue what his involvement will be in this deliverance. Maybe you are at that place today in your life. You're sort of watching and waiting. That's okay. It's just good to know at this point that God knows, God cares, and God will deliver!

Verse 8b

"...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."

God is not only aware of the Hebrews situation and has the power to deliver them from that situation; He also has the power "to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey..." When Moses heard the words "good land and a large" it must have created thoughts of vast acres of productivity and richness. This is the first use of the phrase "a land flowing with milk and honey" in the Bible but this would be a phrase that would oft be repeated in reference to the bounty and blessing of the land of Canaan (Exodus 13:5; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 6:3; Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5). The reference to six of the nations in the Promised Land will be discussed in verse 17.

Verse 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."

The repetition of verse seven in this verse serves as a reminder that God's ears are always open to the cries of His children. When the "children of Israel" cried unto the Lord He took note of what they were saying and what they were feeling. The repetition of these words also provides an introduction to verse 10.

God and His Man (Exodus 3:10-17)

Verse 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."

"Come now therefore" must have been shocking words for Moses to hear. Moses had been living on the backside of nowhere for forty years convincing himself that the Lord was done with him. Furthermore, up until now in this conversation, God has been talking to Moses about impersonal stuff. "Now" God is ready to work through Moses to deliver His people from Egypt. "Now," after four hundred years of bondage the time has come. "Now," all of a sudden, God is getting very personal and telling him He is going to "send" him "unto Pharaoh." God's word to Moses is simple, "I will send thee" and "You will bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." God is not asking Moses for his opinion or his advice regarding this situation. When God speaks to His servants it is settled.

God has some things in mind for each of His children. You would think believers would be excited about doing God's will and fulfilling His purpose and plan. But like Moses sometimes we don't want any part of what God is doing. Maybe it's not that we don't want to do God's will, maybe "now" is not a good time for us. If God says, "now," then it is time "now."

Verse 11

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses' question, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt" is somewhat refreshing considering the haughtiness and self-assertion among so many of God's servants today. Moses was possibly thinking that the Egyptians would no longer respect him and the Israelites would probably question his ability to lead them out of Egypt. There must have been a million thoughts rushing through his mind.

Some have interpreted Moses' question as inappropriate. Certainly we should obey the Lord and do as He asks but Moses' reluctance here is possibly a reflection of a tendering of his spirit during his shepherding days in the wilderness. Forty years earlier Moses was eager to do something about the Hebrews situation and ended up murdering an Egyptian. The solitude of shepherding had sobered him. Keeping sheep had calmed him down. As a result of that he asks, "Who am I?"

Verse 12

"And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

God does not actually answer Moses' question. Instead, the Lord replies, "Certainly I will be with thee." What God is saying to Moses and to all of us who seek to do His will is, "You don't need to worry about who you are, you need to remember who I AM."

You would think that one "Certainly I will be with thee" would be enough for Moses but evidently he needed more assurance. Just in case Moses had any remaining doubts about what God would do through him to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, the Lord said, "...and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." The "sign" God is giving Moses here would not be confirmed until he actually led the people out of Egypt and brought them back to the "mountain" where Moses was. The "mountain" was Mount Sinai.

If the "sign" of assurance God gave Moses would not be fulfilled until the Israelites were delivered and led to Mount Sinai, how did this "sign" help Moses in his present situation? The answer is not an easy one to come by except to believe that God wanted Moses to believe all of this was possible by faith. Moses would never see the "sign" come to pass unless he undertook the mission and delivered God's people.

Verse 13

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"

Instead of responding positively to the assurance and promised sign of verse 12, Moses further manifested a reluctance to obey the call of God. Moses thinks that when he gets to Egypt the "children of Israel" will start asking all different types of questions and he won't know how to respond. In other words, Moses is telling the Lord he can't do this because he doesn't have all the answers. That's what he means when he asks, "what shall I say unto them?"

Is it possible that Moses thinks all of this depends upon him? Does he think that the exodus from Egypt and all that involves is resting on his shoulders? If so, he is sadly mistaken. And what about you? Are you thinking that your family situation

or your child's future all depends upon you? Are you feeling the pressure of the world upon your shoulders? If so, you're not alone. And God has a word for you just as He did for Moses.

Verse 14

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

There is not a Sunday school teacher, preacher or Bible scholar that is capable of expounding and interpreting the glorious truth of this verse. In fact, Moses probably spent the rest of his life trying to figure out everything God meant when He said, "I AM THAT I AM." If Exodus 3:5 was "holy ground," then this verse is "holy ground" as well. The best way to describe what is being said in this verse is that God is saying to Moses, "I will be Who I AM always." God is the "ever-present God." God is sovereign (Exodus 33:19). Also, God is concealing as much from Moses as He is revealing. God wants Moses and you to know that He is more than you will ever need!

In verses 11 and 13, Moses is focusing on his insufficiencies. In verses 12 and 14 God wants Moses to focus on His sufficiency. The "I AM" God is not a God limited to the past or just promised in the future. He is now. He will meet you in your present no matter what your circumstances may be.

Verse 15

"And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

Going a little further in His answer to Moses, God told Moses to "say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers...hath sent me unto you." Why is it important that Moses tell the "children of Israel" that "The LORD GOD" had sent him? The name "LORD" is the Hebrew word "*Yahweh*" or "Jehovah, the self-existing One." It is the most intimate term for the living Lord in the Hebrew vocabulary. God was saying, "Moses, when you speak to the children of Israel, you tell them the intimate God of Israel has sent you to be His representative."

God also wanted Moses and the children of Israel to know that "The LORD" was the same One who was "LORD" of their fathers, "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

God's revelation of Himself to the captives in Egypt will be consistent with His self-revelation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

"This is my name for ever" means there will be no change (Revelation 1:4, 8; 11:17; 16:5). "This is my memorial unto all generation" means by the name "Jehovah" God will be remembered by all generations to come.

Verse 16-17

"Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

The "elders of Israel" most likely refers to certain men who held official rank and position among their brethren, the heads of the various houses (Exodus 6:14, 25; 11:21). These individuals exercised a certain authority even during the worst times of their affliction and bondage in Egypt. Moses was to go to them first to tell them about his mission, and was then to go with them to Pharaoh and tell him what God had said (Exodus 3:18).

The words of verses 16-17 probably sound familiar because they are almost identical to the words God spoke at the beginning of Exodus 3. The same God who promised "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" a "land" will now make good on His promise. God was not sending Moses to Egypt to just deliver the Israelites from Pharaoh's bondage. He was delivering the children of Israel that He might "bring them up out" and "unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites." These six groups of people living in Canaan occupied territory that would one day in the future belong to God's people. By naming these groups God was revealing to Moses and Israel the great potential offered to them if they would follow the Lord and obey His commands. Sadly, several of these groups of people remained in their territory because of Israel's unbelief once they entered into the Promised Land.

Conclusion

The Book of Exodus and the life of Moses show us that God is always working out His plan. Things may seem to be going contrary to that in your life but rest assured the Lord is in control. God used a reluctant, hesitant, and often times disobedient

Moses to deliver His people. God was extremely patient with Moses as He taught him and prepared him to lead God's people out of bondage.

Do you know anyone who is enslaved? Do you know anyone who is living under the oppression of the enemy? Can you help deliver them? Is there anything you know about God that you could share with them? God may be preparing to do a great work somewhere. And He may be ready to use you? Are you willing to be used? Let God use you today in delivering someone.

Amen.