

Title: **THE GOSPEL OF THE BURNING BUSH**

Text: Exodus 3:1-6

Subject: *Christ Revealed in the Burning Bush*

Introduction:

Yesterday, I received a religious paper that I get every month. One article caught my attention immediately because the writer was calling for a return to gospel preaching. You can imagine my disappointment, when I read these comments.

“Some argue that the whole Bible is the gospel. That is plainly not the case. The law is not the gospel, nor are the Proverbs, and there is no gospel in Ecclesiastes...All the Bible is the Word of God, but not all the Bible is the gospel. So a preacher in the middle of a series on the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ must not imagine he is preaching the gospel, unless he chooses to introduce it from somewhere else in the New Testament.”

The writer went on to argue that we should have specified times

“for regular gospel preaching,” so “that believers will know when to invite their unbelieving friends, and be sure that they will not be bored with something irrelevant to their condition.”

By the time I got to that statement, my disappointment turn to anger. So I put the paper down to collect my thoughts and calm down. Last night, I read the article several more times to be sure I had not missed something, or misread something. I had not done so.

When I first picked up the paper and read that article, I was preparing the message I will preach to you tonight. As I read that infuriating article, I could not help recalling a statement I heard Bro. Henry Mahan make when I was just 19 years old. — “Any preacher who cannot preach the gospel from the Old Testament does not know the gospel.” That statement echoed in my soul throughout the day and was still ringing in my mind when I awoke this morning. — “Any preacher who cannot preach the gospel from the Old Testament does not know the gospel.”

My message tonight will be taken from one the 2nd book of the law, the Book of Exodus. I sincerely hope none of you will find it boring and irrelevant. The title of my message is — “**The Gospel of the Burning Bush.**” Our text will be Exodus 3:1-6. I am not going to use this text to preach the gospel. I am not going to preach to you from this text. I am going to preach this text, the message of the text, if God the Holy Spirit will enable me. It is the message of every text in the Book of God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Proposition: In these six verses the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our blessed Savior did not merely perform a super-natural miracle, — He revealed himself to his servant Moses as God our Savior.

(Exodus 3:1-6) “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.”

MOSES THE SHEPHERD

(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.”

Moses is on the back side of the desert in the land of Midian, the land of Cush, the son of Ham, among a cursed people from whom he was pleased to take his wife. And there he was tending sheep as a shepherd. Those facts are not insignificant. They are intended by the Spirit of God to teach us more than a few, scanty details of Moses’ life in Midian. In all these things, Moses typifies our blessed Savior.

- The Son of God came into this world, to live among a cursed people, in this cursed land, and to be numbered among the cursed.
- The Lord of Glory was pleased to take his bride from the cursed people.
- And, like Moses, our dear Savior, assumed the despised roll of a shepherd (Gen. 46:34; John 10:14-18).

(Genesis 46:34) “That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, *and* also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.”

(John 10:14-18) “I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. (15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

(Exodus 3:2) “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.”

The Lord willing, I will come back to this in another message. For now, let me simply state once more that “*the Angel of the Lord*” is our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am not guessing about this. In verse 4 we are specifically told that the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses is our Savior. There he is called both “Lord” (Jehovah) and “God” (Eloheem).

The Hebrew word translated “*bush*” is only used one other time in the Word of God. It is found only here and in Deuteronomy 33:16, where Moses speaks of, “*the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.*” And the word translated “dwelt” in Deuteronomy 33:16 is “shakan,” or “shekinah.” In a word, that which Moses saw in the bush was the Shekinah glory of God. He saw Christ in his glory just as Isaiah did in the year that king Uzziah died, and just as Paul did on the Damascus road.

Before Moses could be sent forth to deliver Israel, before any man is able to preach the gospel, he must be made to behold the ineffable glory of the Lord God, and that glory is seen only in the face of the crucified Christ in whom and by whom redemption has been accomplished (Isa. 6:1-8; 2 Cor. 4:4-6). Until a man sees what Moses saw that day, in the Mountain of God, he has nothing to preach, everything he has to say (in so far as spiritual matters are concerned) is less than irrelevant. He who is God’s Messenger, the Angel of the Lord, is God’s Message — “*Jesus Christ and him crucified.*”

THE BUSH

(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.”

Here was a wonder that all the magicians of Pharaoh’s court could never imitate, a miracle that baffles all human wisdom. The Lord God our Savior performed a miracle to make himself known as our God and our Savior.

Before we get to the words the Lord spoke to Moses, we will turn aside to see the “*great sight*” of the burning bush. There is much to be seen here.

I do not doubt that Moses was, at first, inspired by nothing but curiosity to turn aside to look at the bush; but once he turned to look he saw that which would forever change him. He saw Christ in his glory! I love it! There are many who, like myself, first come to hear the gospel for the most insignificant reasons, and turn aside to consider the things of God only because of idle curiosity, like Jews did to see John the Baptist and to see the Lord Jesus performing miracles, who are caught by what they see.

- Hugh Latimer used to urge people to come hear the gospel, saying, “though thou comest to sleep; it may be, God may take thee napping.”
- To absent yourself from the preaching of the gospel is to absent yourself from hope.
- Whenever you are tempted to neglect the assembly of God’s saints, always remember Thomas. — He lost much by the neglect of just one meeting.

Christ was in the bush; and Christ is in the gospel. I realize that seems terribly simplistic to many. In my eyes it is profoundly wondrous. The burning bush appeared to Moses that he might see the glory of Christ as set forth in the gospel of God's saving grace. The symbolism was startling.

The bush burned with fire, and yet the bush was not burned. — Profound, mysterious, and miraculous! But the mystery of godliness is indescribably more profound, mysterious, and miraculous.

Fire, in Scripture, is the symbol of divine judgment, of God's holiness in opposition against evil. — "*Our God is a consuming fire*" (Heb 12:29). This is the mystery: — How can God, who is "*a consuming fire*" — burning up all that is contrary to his holy nature — reveal himself without consuming? How can He who is "*of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity*" (Hab 1:13) have anything to do with fallen, sinful, vile, depraved men and women, except in judgment and wrath? The mystery is revealed and resolved only in the gospel, which tells us that "*grace reigns through righteousness,*" not at the expense of righteousness, but "*through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 5:21).

How can that be? "*Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*" only by Christ, who is the Righteousness of God being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:17-21). I remind you, the word "*bush*" means "bramble bush" or "thorn bush." It is a vivid reminder of God's curse upon the earth because of Adam's transgression (Gen. 3:18).

The Son of God, our all-gracious, all-glorious Substitute and Savior entered into the place of the curse for us. The fierce flames of holy wrath engulfed him, but they did not, and could not, consume him. The "*Root out of a dry ground*" not only survived the fire: He consumed it! It was not possible that death should hold the Prince of life. Three days after he died in our place, he came forth triumphant over death, hell, and the grave, and is now alive for evermore, King of kings and Lord of lords! He is not only God of the resurrection: He is the Resurrection and the Life! And, by virtue of his accomplished redemption, he has power over all flesh to give eternal life to whom he will (Luke 20:37-38).

(Luke 20:37-38) "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. (38) For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."

That which Moses saw in the bush is the gospel we believe and preach (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 3:13-14).

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (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.”

(Galatians 3:13-14) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: (14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

THE GOSPEL OF THE BUSH

What is the Gospel of the burning bush? **It is the gospel of Christ.** It is the revelation of him who is the revelation of the invisible God. It is the shekiniah glory assuming and forever dwelling in humanity. Here is “*the tender plant, the Root out of ground,*” in whom resides “*all the fulness of the godhead bodily.*” God is here! And he is God come to save!

The gospel of the burning bush is **the gospel of atonement by a suffering Substitute.** — Fire is in the bush and wraps the bush. The fiery hot assaults of divine wrath fell upon God’s dear Son, when he died in our place at Calvary.

The gospel of the burning bush is **the gospel of an irresistible, almighty, omnipotent, justice satisfying Sacrifice.** — The fire assailed the bush in vain! The bush was unharmed by the fire that engulfed it! So it was with Christ our Sacrifice! Every blow recoiled from Immanuel. Sustained by his eternal deity, he trod all foes beneath his feet. He burst the bands of death. He smashed the iron gates of the grave. He stood victorious on the ruins of hell defeated. He rode triumphantly into the heaven of heavens, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

The gospel of the burning bush is **the gospel of the eternal security of God’s elect.** Who can fail to see that as this bush represents our Lord Jesus Christ, it represents the whole election of grace? Persecutions and trials are the fire, which assails us with ceaseless fury. But God’s saints thrive and gain strength, bud and blossom and flourish in the fire. How can that be? God indwells us! And where God resides there is unceasing, ever-springing life!

In all ages, though afflicted and distressed, God’s people are like to a thorn bush, in ourselves weak and without strength, contemptible and low, covered with the thorns of corruptions and temptations within and without, often in the fires of afflictions and persecutions. Yet, they are not, and never can be, consumed by the fire, for Christ is with us, among us, around us, and in us!

- Satan roars; but Christ is mine.
- Hell oppose me; but Christ is in me.
- I am weak; but he is strong.
- The world allures me; but Christ keeps me.
- My very flesh would destroy me; but my Savior keeps me!
- Christ in you defies all and everything who oppose you!

Christ’s church is the chosen home of his unbounded love. Here his all-protecting might, his all-preserving care, his full delights, repose. He received it from his Father as his spouse — His jewels — His peculiar treasure — His portion — The fullness of his body — The completeness

of his mediatorial glory. He is engaged to present it holy, unblameable, unproveable, and complete before his Father's throne. If one member be injured, Christ is marred. If one is absent, Christ is maimed. Christ our God and Savior is ever with us — All heart to love — All eye to watch — All hand to help — All wisdom to direct — All power to beat back foes. Let the fire rage! Until Christ is consumed by the flame, we cannot be!

GOOD WILL

Children of God, think much of the "*goodwill of him who dwelt in the bush.*" Fears then will flee away. If you stood alone, it would be presumption to hope. Because you are not alone, it is offence to tremble.

Look back. Many conflicts are behind, and yet you live. How is it? You reply with Paul, "*The Lord stood with me and strengthened me.*" "*The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*" Your present fight is hot. But you hear a much-loved voice, "*Do not fear, for I am with you.*" The bush burns with fire, and the bush is not consumed.

Look forward. The horizon is dark with clouds of tribulation. But the same voice cheers, "*Fear, for I am with you; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.*" The bush shall burn with fire, but it shall not be consumed!

Pause here, and search your conscience. Is your body a temple of Jesus Christ, through the Spirit? Is Christ dwelling in your heart by faith? Is Christ in you, the hope of glory? If it is not so, the comfort of the burning bush is not yours. Remember, there are thorns and briers, "*whose end is to be burned.*" Tares must be bound in bundles for wrath's full-heated furnace. A terrible voice wails from the region of the lost, "*I am tormented in this flame.*" "*The day comes that shall burn as an oven and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.*" "*The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever.*"

Oh, may God the Holy Spirit cause you to now turn aside and see this great sight and trust him who reveals himself in the gospel of the burning bush. Oh, may he be pleased to reveal himself to you in the glory of his saving grace in Christ, as God in the covenant with you and for you, as he did to Moses.

(Exodus 3:4-6) "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."

Amen.

[\[1\]](#) Date: Danville — Tuesday Evening — February 28, 2006
Sovereign Grace Church, Jackson, MO — (FRI PM 03/04/06)

Tape # Exodus #13

Readings: *Rex Bartley and David Burge*