

“The Burning Bush”
Exodus 3:1-9
(Preached at Trinity, July 30, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Time passes quickly in the Book of Exodus. If we accept the late date of Exodus, over 300 years passed from the end of Genesis to the beginning of Exodus. These were dark years. It would appear that revelation ceased during the years between Jacob and Moses. In **Chapter 2** forty years passed between **Verses 10-11**. As we enter into **Chapter 3** another 40 years has passed. Moses is now 80 years old.
2. The first forty years of Moses’ life was spent in Egypt. He received the finest Egyptian education. The second forty years of his life was spent in Midian where his education continued—he was being taught by God.
Although the Bible often passes quickly over time, God is active each minute of each day. Moses may have thought he would die in obscurity, but God had other plans for Moses. Israel may have thought that God had abandoned them—but God never forgets His people.
3. As **Chapter 2** closes the children of Israel had been under bondage for 400 years. Eventually they groaned unto God.
Exodus 2:23 – “. . . the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.”
4. Their cries did not go unheard. God heard their groaning and remembered His covenant with Abraham and set forth His plan for their deliverance.
5. While the first two chapters cover Israel’s 400 years of bondage, the remainder of the book covers the year of their deliverance.
6. Moses was in Midian tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. He had led the flock to the far side of the desert to Mount Horeb also known as Mount Sinai where Moses would later receive the Ten Commandments.
 - A. It was Divine Providence that brought Moses to the far side of the desert. Moses did not meet God where Moses was—Moses was brought to where God was.
 - B. Under the Old Covenant God placed great emphasis upon His holiness as He dealt with Israel. They were commanded not to approach the mountain for God was present there. His glory emanated from the Holy of Holies and none but the high priest could enter.
 - C. We must never forget that God is a holy God. Our emphasis upon a “personal relationship” often breeds a sinful familiarity. God is holy.
7. It was there at Horeb that Moses came upon a burning bush. In the hot desert this may not have been too unusual except this bush was burning but was not being consumed by the fire. The fire seemed to have no effect upon the bush. This was most unusual and Moses drew nearer to investigate the strange occurrence.

- A. This is one of several theophanies in the Bible. A theophany is a visible representation of God
Exodus 13:21 – “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:”
Exodus 40:34 – “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”
- B. In **Verse 2** we find that it was the “angel of the Lord” that appeared to him but in **Verse 4** we are told that it was God who called out to him and in **Verse 6** God declares Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and in **Verse 7** He is referred to as the LORD – Jehovah God.
- C. It would not unreasonable to see the identity of this “Angel of the Lord” as our Lord Jesus Christ – the ultimate Deliverer of God’s people.
8. As Moses approached a voice came from the midst of the bush and called out to Moses. Then the voice told him to stop! He had come into the presence of God. Even the ground became sacred.
- A. God told him to remove his shoes for he was standing upon holy ground. God commands how He will be approached.
- B. God must always be approached in an attitude of worship. Remove your shoes! Leave behind all that is defiled.
- C. Under the Gospel we can approach boldly to the throne of God, but not irreverently.
 Matthew Henry: “We ought to approach to God with a solemn pause and preparation; and, though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet we ought to glorify God with our bodies, and to express our inward reverence by a grave and reverent behaviour in the worship of God, carefully avoiding everything that looks light, and rude, and unbecoming the awfulness of the service.”
9. In the burning bush God revealed many of the attributes of His divine nature. Tonight I want us to examine some of these attributes.
- I. God is a spirit
- A. God is not bound by any physical existence
1. God always appeared by way of Theophany
He does not possess a body
 2. Every reference to physical attributes are anthropomorphisms
 3. No one has ever seen God
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*.”
- B. As a spiritual being God occupies all of creation – omnipresent
Psalms 139:7-10 – “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”
1. God cannot be confined to space or location
 2. God is transcendent above this material world
 3. Although He appeared in a bush He could not be confined to a bush
 4. For 80 years God had been with Moses
 - a. As an infant floating down the Nile

- b. As a youth being trained by the Egyptian
- c. As a shepherd in Midian for 40 years
- 5. God was ever present with Israel
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;”
- 6. God is ever present with us – through every struggle, every difficulty

II. God is Omnipotent

- A. God has the power to do His holy will
 - 1. Moses was amazed because what he saw was contrary to the natural course – fire will consume a bush every time without fail.
 - 2. It was a small thing for Him to make a bush burn without being consumed
 - 3. God is all powerful – His power knows no end, no boundaries
God is able to do whatever He pleases.
- B. God governs His creation with great power
 - 1. Creation was accomplished with just a spoken word
As Creator He owns all things and He has the right and the might to dispose of it according to his good pleasure
 - 2. God created fire and determined its power. He can suspend its power if He pleases.
 - 3. Stephen Charnock described the power of God –
“The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinity purity of His will may resolve.”
- C. God’s power is derived from Himself - He is the sole cause
He receives orders from none
 - 1. It was not derived from birth
 - 2. No one commissioned Him or instructs Him -
He receives orders from none

III. The Splendor and Majesty of God

- A. The bush displayed God’s Shekinah glory in the form of the flame
 - 1. The fire was a type of the presence of God
 - 2. God is holy, separate, full of majesty and glory
Hebrews 12:28-29 – “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.”
- B. The Hebrew word for Holy literally means separate or set apart
 - 1. **Verse 5** is the first time in the Bible that the word holy is applied to God
 - 2. Later Moses would write,
Exodus 15:11 – “Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?”
 - 3. God is also separate in that He is above everything else – above all creation –
 - a. He is transcendent
 - b. Everything depends upon Him for existence.

4. God is separate from sin – no sin has ever occupied existence with God
When Satan sinned he was thrust from the presence of God
When Adam sinned he was thrust from the presence of God
 5. God is holy, we are evil. Our eyes are too wicked to gaze upon God –
God’s eyes are too pure to look upon us. That is why we must be clothed
with the righteousness of Christ.
- C. If God is holy He must be approached with reverence
1. When Moses saw the burning bush it looked like common fire, except the
fire did not consume the bush
 2. When Moses found out that the fire was the very presence of God it
suddenly took upon new meaning – he saw the majesty of God
Exodus 3:6 – “And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look
upon God.”
 3. This may look like a common building, but we are in the presence of God.
This should cause us to bow with great reverence.
- IV. God is Eternal and Unchanging
- A. The bush burned but remained the same – it was not changed
1. God is immutable – unchanging.
Psalms 90:2 – “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever
thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to
everlasting, thou *art* God.”
 2. God had no beginning - has no end. He is infinite in every way
 2. Stephen Charnock - "He was before the world, yet he neither began nor
ends; he is not a temporary, but an eternal God; it takes in both parts of
eternity, what was before the creation of the world, and what is after;
though the eternity of God be one permanent state, without succession, yet
the spirit of God, suiting himself to the weakness of our conception,
divides into two parts; one past before the foundation of the world, another
to come after the destruction of the world; as he did exist before all ages,
and as he will exist after all ages."
(Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God*,
p. 278)
- B. All of creation is continually changing
1. In our fallen world all is in a state of decay
 2. Fire demonstrates how all things are being consumed – fire quickly
oxidizes the combustible source.
- C. God’s mode of existence is different from ours.
1. God exists in every moment of time. He also inhabits eternity.
 2. God is the same today as He was 100 trillion years ago
More accurately, God has remained unchanged from eternity.
 3. God can neither increase or decrease.
 - a. He is not subject to any development.
 - b. He has never known more or less than He knows –
He neither learns nor forgets.

4. He is not affected by anything external to Himself
 - a. Fire normally changes that which it consumes – it can reduce a home to ashes
 - b. Nothing can change God
God is unchangeable in all His attributes

V. The self-sufficiency of God

- A. Normally fire needs a fuel to exist
 1. Fire will burn wood until the wood has been consumed
 2. Fire is dependent upon the fuel
 3. With the burning bush the fire was self-sufficient – it did not need the bush as its source of fuel and so it burned without consuming the bush
- B. God is fully self-sufficient
John 5:26 – “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;”
 1. God has His being in Himself - All that God is comes from within Himself
He is self-sufficient, self-complete, self-contented, self-sustaining, self-determining
God needs nothing outside of Himself
 2. God does not need us or anything else in creation
 - a. He does not need our labors – though He commands it
We are highly blessed in the privilege of serving
 - b. He does not need our money – though He demands it
All wealth comes from Him
 - c. He does not need our worship – though He will be worshipped

Conclusion:

1. God is a gracious God. He has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity. All of His self-revelations of Himself teach us something about Him.
2. The ultimate revelation of God to man is in the person of Christ.
Hebrews 1:1-3 – “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ² Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; ³ Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”
John 1:14 – “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
3. He is glorious to behold. It is wonderful to worship Him. But He will only be approached with reverence.