

Exodus 3-4 • The burning bush and a reluctant servant

In Jesus name, amen. Amen. Chapter 3, you ready?

It says, *“Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, ...” (ESV)*

Now, what you're not being told essentially is that he's been in the area of Midian for 40 years. He's now 80 years old and he's still keeping the flock of his father in law. By the way, just so you don't get confused, Moses's father in law was known by 2 names. He was known by Jethro and Ruel, so there you go.

And it says here, we're still in verse 1, *“...and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.”* And another thing you need to probably know is that Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. It is listed in the Hebrew as, Horeb when it is mentioned. And yet there are a lot of Bibles that will just put Sinai in there even though the Hebrew says Horeb just because they're trying to remain consistent or something like that. But just so you know.

It is referred to here as the mountain of God because it was there that the Lord would later reveal His law and His character, frankly, to the nation of Israel. This comment that it is the mountain of God is a little out of time. It's a little anachronistic.

Verse 2 says, *“And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.”*

You can imagine, that would be a fairly strange sight. You're sitting there, and he's got all the time in the world. He's watching this, and he sees this bush that's literally engulfed in flame, but it's not being consumed by the fire. That suggests that he sat and watched it for a while. He's gazing at this thing over a period of time, and he's wondering why this isn't burning down and eventually going out. And, there you go.

It says that, *“the angel of the LORD,”* you'll notice, appeared to him. Now, of course, he doesn't know any of this yet. But I want you to know that the term, *“the angel of the LORD”* is one that we've seen already multiple times in our

study of the Book of Genesis. But that term can refer to a special messenger from the Lord, or it at times can refer to the Lord Himself. And we're going to see that that is in fact the case here.

In verse 3, it says, *"...Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. (and) ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush,..."*

Here's where you hear the voice, right, from Ten Commandments but I'm sure it sounded nothing like that, because, who is it that played Moses again? Say it again. No, the voice of the guy, the actor. Yeah, Charlton Heston. Do you know that was Charlton Heston doing the voice of God? They just slowed it down: M-o-s-e-s. You got to make it holy, when it's God's voice of course, but it was just his... Charlton Heston's talking to himself in that section of the movie, which I probably just ruined it for all of you, but anyway, it's just emblazoned in my brain. All right.

He says, *"Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." (and) ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."*

What do you hear when you, or I should say, what do you see when you hear the Lord saying what He's saying to Moses here. When He says, don't come near and by the way, take off your shoes because you're standing on holy ground. This is the language of the law.

The law always says, stay away. The law says, stay back. The law says, don't touch. The law says, don't come near. This is the language of the law. And it is meant specifically to show that God is Holy, that He is unapproachable. Okay? That God is unapproachable. He is Holy.

He dwells in what the Bible calls, unapproachable light. (1 Timothy 6:16) All right. And it is also meant to show, these statements are meant to show, and frankly, everything God says about the law in the coming books of the Bible are meant to communicate to you and me, essentially, that we are unworthy to approach a Holy God, right?

God is Holy, He's unapproachable, and you can't come near. That's the language of the law. How different is that from the language of the New Testament? And we just, we have a whole different approach in the new Testament, don't we? It's just all different, and yet, sometimes we forget why, and we forget at what price it cost to become different. Right?

Let me show you some examples of how that language so differs from the New Testament or from the Old Testament to the New.

James 4:8 says,

James 4:8 (ESV)

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Draw near to God, (there's the invitation) and he will draw near to you.

Matthew 11, Jesus Himself says,

Matthew 11:28 (ESV)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

And Hebrews 10:22,

Hebrews 10:22 (ESV)

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

What is the message of the New Testament? Come near, come in, you're welcome, join me, God says, come close.

Now, what changed? Is God less Holy than He was when He spoke to Moses? And are you more worthy? I think we know the answer to those questions. Yeah, right.

God is still the same Holy God who lives in unapproachable light, and apart from what Jesus did on the cross, you are still entirely unworthy to enter His presence and you always will be.

What changed, is that Jesus Christ made you worthy, that's what changed. He robed you in His righteousness through His death on the cross and now we are bid, come. Come into the presence of God anytime you want come you can come, we don't have to stay away. It is incredible to me how often born again believers fall to the deceptive voice of the enemy and feel that they can't come

into the presence of the Lord. And sometimes they'll write to me and say, pastor Paul, I just, I feel so unworthy. I don't feel like I can even pray. I don't feel like a God would even want me to pray. He doesn't want me to come near. I've sinned so badly, I've messed up so much in my life.

There was a period of time where I just, I didn't want anything to do with God. And now I recognize the error of my ways, but I'm so laden with guilt, and regret, and shame, from the way I've lived that I just don't feel like God even wants me close.

And I write the same thing every time to those people. That is a lie from the pit of hell. And that is exactly what satan wants you to believe because he knows he can keep you out of God's presence and he can make you hopeless. And that, of course is his goal, to make you hopeless.

God wants you to know that there is a promise in His Word that, if we confess our sins, He's faithful and just and will forgive us, cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

And the door is open, and He's saying come, come, join me, come in, I want to fellowship with you. Why are you holding back? I'm holding back because of my sin. Oh, believer, don't you know that the death of Jesus is greater than your sin? Don't you know that the suffering of the Savior is greater than your sin?

And what the enemy wants to do is get you to fixate and focus on your sin because if you can keep your eyes on that, you won't look at the Savior in what He's done. You won't be able to see it because your eyes are filled with yourself.

Do you understand Christians, that over the course of the last few decades, that have fostered this, me revolution, this, me movement. It has become the jumping off point for so much heartache and so much junk in the body of Christ that we are today fighting against. Because people are so fixated on themselves, and their emotions, their feelings, and their own life.

And because all they can see is their own life, they can't see the work of the Savior. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It's like, get your eyes off yourself, get over yourself. And start looking at Jesus and what He did for you on the cross. And it will change your life. It really is incredible.

He wants you. He invites you, the invitation is open. It's like, well, I think I've sinned too much. Oh, really? No, you haven't. No, you haven't. If there's breath

in your lungs and you want to come to God, the door is wide open, so just come in for heaven's sakes and get over yourself. It's time. It's time.

Anyway, it goes on here. *“And he said, (verse 6, He says,) “I am the God of your 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 at God.”*

That's the human response. When we are in the presence of a Holy God, recognizing our own unworthiness, we don't even want to look at Him.

I remember a time in my life when I didn't want to look at God, I could not look. And anybody that wanted to talk about God, I didn't want to look at them either. I passed by churches without looking at the direction of the church. As I was going through the channels, if there was a Christian program on, the remote couldn't go fast enough past that channel. I just didn't want to be anywhere near it. That's the, it's the human response and that's what the enemy plays on. Yeah, see, you are unworthy. Yeah. Just remember, Jesus made you worthy through His blood.

Verse 7. *“Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*

⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.””

And look what unworthiness does to somebody. *“¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?””*

I want you to notice Moses is going to raise several objections during this conversation. He's eventually going to earn himself the ire of the Lord, the Lord's going to be angry with him.

But he starts off with this issue of his own undeserved condition in life. He says, I don't deserve such a calling. I want you to pay attention to how the Lord answers this objection. Because what did he say? He says, *“Who am I...?”* And

notice that God doesn't say, well, you're Moses, people are going to remember you for a long time to come, dude.

He just says, “¹² ...*But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.*”

The Lord, you'll notice, gives Moses 2 promises. But the first is a very important response to the objection that, who am I to do this? Again, again, God doesn't say, you're somebody special, dude. And that's what the world's trying to do. They're trying to get you to say, I'm special. You can do it because you just need to believe in yourself. You just need to believe in yourself because you're special.

God doesn't ever say that because He knows who we are and He knows that there's really nothing very special about any of us, frankly.

What does He say? “...*I will be with you...*” “...*I will be with you...*” In other words, rather than trying to fill Moses's head full of a bunch of hooey that, no, you can do it, buddy, you're special.

He says, I will fill up the lack in you. In other words, I'll take care of the limitations that you might otherwise recognize in yourself.

Do you recognize limitations in yourself? I think we all do, at least if you're living in that little place that I like to call reality. We know, we see ourselves. The longer you live, the more aware you are of your own personal limitations. And it's about at that point that the Lord calls us to some element of service. And we go, me!!! and the Lord's going, yeah just chill. Again, it's get over yourself. I'm going to be with you.

In other words, I'm going to fill the areas of your limitation because here's the point, God says, I have no limitations. That's it. That's it. He says, I'm going to fill this for you because I have no limitations. I am not limited by anything. You are, and I'm not, and we're not going to play games with that reality. You are limited, but I'm here with you. I will be with you.

That should have been all Moses needed to hear. That should have been the end of his objections right there, and he should have just gone on and just said, well, you know what if you're with me, then boom baby I'm in, sign me up. Here's what's interesting. Later on, much later on. God is going to be speaking to Moses on the mountaintop, and He's going to say to Moses. I will no longer be

with this people on your journey to the promised land because if I stay with you guys any longer, I'm just going to kill the lot of you because you are such incredible sinners.

And you know what Moses is going to say, he's going to say, I'm not going to go one more inch without you. You don't go, I don't go, so you see somewhere along the line, this whole idea of I will be with you, really, really caught on in his heart. And he knew I'm not going anywhere without God. I'm not doing anything without God, but if He's with me, then I can do it. Right.

Don't you feel that way about life? You're, if God's with me, I can handle this. As long as long as God's with me, I can do this. Whatever it is and sometimes that takes going through some really challenging circumstances to come to that realization that I can do this with the Lord. All right.

But the second thing you'll notice He tells him in the way of a promise is that He says, *"and this shall be the sign for you,"* You will return to this very spot with the liberated people of Israel, you're going to bring them all out. And you're going to worship and serve me right here.

I wonder if Moses knew at this point that, that group of liberated people was going number somewhere around 2.5 million people? Probably not. Anyway, here we go.

Verse 13. *"Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?'"* This is the next semi objection, although it's really not an unreasonable question.

"¹⁴ God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" All right, I need you to pause there for a minute because I need to explain some things.

The Hebrew phrase that is rendered, *"I AM THAT I AM."* Which of course speaks of God's eternal nature, His self-sufficiency and His lack of a beginning. God has no beginning and He has no end.

You and I can't say, I am that I am. I have to say I am because my parents were, and they were because their parents were, and on, and on, and on, and on. And then ultimately, they were because Adam and Eve were if we go back far enough. Only God can say, *"I AM"* because *"I AM."* It is a statement of His self-existence, and it's a concept that we really can't comprehend. If you try to

make your mind go back there, you'll eventually get a cramp in your brain because we just can't do it. We can't. We can know that God is self-existent, but we cannot know how He is self-existent. You with me? And there's a great difference that is there.

God is in need of nothing. He's saying, "*I AM THAT I AM.*" But what's important also about this statement is, this is where we get the name of God. This is where we get YAHWEH because the word, or the name I should say, YAHWEH. And there's a lot we don't know about it is most likely a form of the Hebrew verb, to be. The statement, "*I AM THAT I AM*" can also be translated, actually that, I will be who I will be. It can go both ways. In fact, it probably encompasses both meanings. "*I AM THAT I AM,*" I will be who I will be. That verb that, I will be, that is where we actually get YAHWEH.

And it is a mysterious name because first of all, nobody really knows how it should be translated or even pronounced because the ancient Hebrew omitted vowels, they just put consonants in the text, so they never ever wrote it out in a way that... I mean, think of your name and take out any vowels that are there. My name would be, PL and you'd have to guess the, AU.

All we have with YAHWEH are 4 letters. Let me put this on the screen for you so you can see it.

YHWH

Appearing as LORD (all caps) in most English Bibles

YHWH. Appearing as LORD (all caps) in most English Bibles.

We have this, we have, "YHW" in some cases, you'll see that as a "VH." And when this appears in the Hebrew text, your Bible renders it as LORD, but it does it in all capital letters. And that's how you know it is giving you the rendering of, YAHWEH.

Some say, Yahovah or Jehovah. YAHWEH is probably more accurate. But again, we're guessing about this. But whenever the Jews would read from the scriptures in the synagogue, they would come to the Hebrew letters, which are transliterated there: YHWH. And they, instead of saying, YHWH they refuse to even pronounce it so they would say Adonai, which means Lord or Master. They would just substitute Adonai instead, because again, they believed that the name of God was too holy to pronounce.

And by the way, YAHWEH, which puts some vowels in there, you might say, well, why did they decide on the vowels that we do put in there for YAHWEH? They actually are taken from, Adonai. They took the vowels from Adonai and put them in and said, this is our best guess as to how this is pronounced. And it's been referred to as an educated guess, I guess, but it's a guess nonetheless.

Oh, and here's an example, by the way, from the Psalms where both YAHWEH and Adonai appear. You might've remember this Psalm 8:9 says,

Psalm 8:9 (ESV)

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Well, you'll notice that the first one is capitalized, so that's YAHWEH. The second one is not capitalized, that's Adonai. It's basically, “*Oh, YAHWEH, our Adonai, how majestic is your name in all the earth?*” And this was common in the scripture so every time you see those all caps, or your Bible, if you have a different translation, it might put it in small caps. Again, that is what we call the Tetragrammaton. Fancy name that just simply means, it's a transliteration of YAHWEH. All right.

Continuing on verse 15. “*God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, (by the way, there’s YAHWEH, right there) the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.*

¹⁶ *Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, (there it is again, YAHWEH) the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷ and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’*

¹⁸ *And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD (YAHWEH), the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to (YAHWEH our God, or) the Lord our God.’”*

Now, obviously, you'll notice there that they were initially to ask to go a 3 day's journey into the wilderness. This is ultimately far, less than what they wanted, which was total freedom. But it was to be a minimal test, if you will, of Pharaoh's openness to respond to the voice of YAHWEH. And so they were going to start small and go from there.

Anyway, verse 19. *"But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, ²² but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."*

Well, that's a summary of what's going to be happening, isn't it? God's leaving out a lot of the details for Moses, but He's giving him a general idea of what's going to take place. Chapter 4, *"Then Moses answered,..."* I don't know, I don't even know why they put a chapter division here because the conversation is still going on between Moses and the Lord. I assume they did it just because they didn't want the chapters to be that long.

"Then Moses answered, 'But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" ² *The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff."* ³ *And he said, "Throw it on the ground."* So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴ *But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—* ⁵ *"that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."*

⁶ *Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow.* ⁷ *Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh.* ⁸ *"If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹ If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."*

God gives Moses these 3 signs to show the Israelites: his staff becoming a serpent, his hand becoming leprous and then being healed again, and then the water of the Nile turning to blood.

I should mention to you at this point that some Bible students see in these 3 signs given to Moses, symbolic references to various aspects of something greater to come. In other words, they see this taking the serpent by the tail to be a representation of ultimately power over satan or the victory over the serpent.

Being healed of leprosy is a picture of power over sin and the blood. Speaking of Israel's redemption through the shedding of blood and ultimately ours as well. Anyway, I'm not totally sure how far you can go with that sort of connecting of dots, but it's interesting nonetheless so I thought I'd bring it up to you.

Verse 10 goes on. It says, *“But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my LORD, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.””*

All right, so here's the next objection. He objects to his calling based on yet another personal limitation concerning his inability, or maybe I should say ability to speak eloquently, or to articulate what needs to be said.

And *“...the LORD (I love this, verse 11, the LORD) said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”*

In other words, He's saying again, what is your limitation where I am concerned? That's the question. What is your limitation where I am concerned?

By the way, I don't know if your theology gets a little ruffled when you read verse 11, where the Lord says, who makes a man mute? That means unable to speak or who makes a man blind, which is unable to see. And I don't know if that messes anything with... Because I've had people express to me some real trouble with verses like that, and this is not the only one.

The Lord goes on to say other places. I'm the one who builds up and I'm the one who destroys. And there are times, I mean, as believers, we just, we want to see God in just this perfect light that never does anything that we personally wouldn't see as like bad or wrong. And we're willing at that point to literally call God out and to say, no, wait just a minute here. Why would you make someone mute? Why would you make someone blind? I like the fact that you build up,

but why would you destroy? Why would you do that? And we're really on the precipice of saying, that's not right to the Lord God.

And that's where our human arrogance reveals itself. Because what we're doing is we're putting our self in the place of God and we're basically making a judgment call and we're saying I've weighed that on the scales of my own understanding of justice and you just flunked so there you go. Sorry, God, you got that one wrong, go back and try again.

And little do we know that we just don't have the story. We don't, and we don't possess the goods to be able to make that kind of a judgment call. In fact, anything that goes on in your life or the lives of anybody that you look at and you cock your head and go, I wonder why the Lord allowed that. You don't have the ability to even ask that question, let alone get an answer from Him.

And if you're struggling with this, I would encourage you to do a study of the Book of Job. Because the Book of Job is absolutely chock full of that basic premise. The question of, why is this happening? Job's buddies come along and in their arrogance they go, well, I know. I know why this is happening. You're a big, fat, lazy sinner slob, and if you'll just repent, God will turn this all around for you.

And at the end of the book, God says, yeah, actually your friends are the ones that need to repent because they have misspoken about Me. He even tells Job's friends, I'm going to have Job pray for you, lest judgment come upon you for the fact that you arrogantly assumed to know what was happening in Job's life. Because we don't, we don't know.

Again, I've said to you many times, and I remind you, Paul says, we see in a mirror darkly. Well, you're either going to believe that or you're not. And if you believe that we see in a mirror darkly, which means we don't have all the facts, we don't have all the information, and in fact, we can't even comprehend all the information, then you're going to sit back and you're going to say, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. That's what you're going to end up saying.

And you're going to say, Lord, I don't get it. I don't understand any of this, but I worship you as King of kings and Lord of lords. One day I know I will understand right now, I don't have a clue. All I know is this hurts and it hurts bad, but I will not let my hurt hold me back from worshiping you as the One who knows, as the One who sees. As the One who works in the lives of men in

ways that I can't begin to understand. By the way, that's called maturity, just in case you were wondering, it's maturity.

Verse 12, *“Now therefore go, and I will be with (you, or I’ll be with) your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”* ¹³ *But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”*” Isn’t there somebody else who can do this?

Now, you might be wondering why Moses throws so many objections to this calling. He obviously doesn’t want to do it. I mean, that's the obvious reason. He doesn't want to do it, but why all the objections? Well, you might say, well, I remember reading another place in the Bible that said that Moses was a very humble man. And he was, in fact.

Let me show you this. I'm going to quote it here, put it up there out of the New American Standard Bible (NASB). It's actually in Numbers chapter 12, verse 3. It says,

Numbers 12:3 (NASB)

(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any person who was on the face of the earth.)

(Now the man Moses was very humble, (in fact, it says,) more than any person who was on the face of the earth.)

That's pretty humble, right?

You're looking at this and you're going, oh, okay, well, I get it. He's a humble man so he objected and ... say I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy. I don't talk very well. This is not really something that I think I'm going to be good at. I think you need to go interview somebody else.

But the point of me showing that passage to you in Numbers is to communicate the fact that humility can go too far when it turns into resistance, unbelief, and disobedience. I mean, it's one thing to understand who you are, right?

It's one thing to say, I know who I am. I know I'm not worthy. I know I don't have the abilities that this job requires and I'm not looking forward to it. That's one thing. It's another thing to flat out say no to God when He calls you and says, I have a job for you to do. You see? Humility is a great thing and we are to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. But we're to humble ourselves so that we might be lifted up. That He might lift us up in His power, in His ability,

understanding that it's not about you. That's not why He called you. He did not call you because you were just the perfect specimen of human being for the job.

He wants a willing heart more than anything else. Humility is great, but not when it turns into disobedience and unbelief. Because that's something else altogether.

The Lord goes on here. I'm still in the middle of verse 14, and He said, *“Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do.*

¹⁶ He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. ¹⁷ And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”

What does that mean? That just simply means that Moses is going to be the one that's going to tell Aaron what to say and Aaron will speak it. And by the way, we don't really know exactly how long that arrangement lasted. I'm sure it lasted for a while, but I also believe there was a point, even though it doesn't say so, where Moses just began to speak for himself. It's like, Aaron, just chill, I'm over it now, and I'll just take it from here. Thanks, buddy. Goodbye.

Anyway it goes on in verse 17 to say, *“and take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”* Both for the people of Israel and in front of Pharaoh.

“¹⁸ Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” ¹⁹ And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.””

I have to wonder if what the Lord is doing here is he's anticipating maybe one more further objection that Moses might have about going back. It's like, well, you remember, I did a boo boo before I left Egypt. I killed a guy, and they were hunting me down and that's why I ran in the first place. And so I think going back to Egypt, I'm just going to go back to the firing line. The Lord just tells him, hey, listen, anybody who was looking for you is long since gone so it's safe.

Verse 20. *“So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.*

²¹ And the LORD said to Moses, (and again, He's going to give him a summary of what's going to happen in Egypt) “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.

²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son,’ ²³ and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”

And what the Lord is doing in these 3 simple verses again, beyond just giving Moses a summary of what's going to happen there in Egypt, is He's telling him how it's going to end in the final plague of Passover. When an angel passes over Egypt and brings death to all the homes where there is no blood applied to the door. We'll get into that here in just a bit. And the firstborn sons of all those homes will die, including the firstborn son of Pharaoh.

Now I want to prepare you a little bit for the next 3 verses which have been challenging Bible students for a lot of years. I'll just tell you that ahead of time. And it's somewhat obscure in the language and it leaves out a ton of information.

But it says in verse 24, *“At a lodging place on the way (they're not there to Egypt yet. It says) the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” ²⁶ So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.”*

Well, there you go. Let's close in prayer. I'm just kidding. This is obviously a very, shortened account of what's happening here. We're given very little information and we're giving, we're given no real context. Other than the fact that we know that circumcision was the covenant sign that was given to Abraham and his descendants as the sign of the covenant between God and the people of Israel, that we know, that we know.

Well, what we obviously have to deduce from the passage is that Moses had failed to circumcise his son. We deduce that just from the fact that the circumcision takes place here in this sort of a situation. And it may very well be

that the reason Moses didn't circumcise his son was because his wife Zipporah objected. Remember, she wasn't born a Jew, she's from the land of Midian. Her father was a priest. Who knows what kind of gods they worshiped.

She's walking into this marriage situation with Moses. He's been raised as an Egyptian, really his whole memorable life and so the whole Jewish thing is out of sight to him. And yet there's obviously some culpability that he has for getting this thing done, because the Lord, we're told was apparently going to, it says, the Lord sought to kill him. By the way, the term, sought to kill him, we're not even sure if that means Moses or the son, that wasn't circumcised, it doesn't say.

Our assumption is that it was dealing with Moses, that he was the culpable one but adding to the mystery of this whole thing, we're not even told in what form the threat to Moses's life came. It just says, the Lord sought to kill him. We don't know how, we have no idea. Was it marauders? Was it some sort of a sickness? Was it an angel who came with a fiery sword that was going to do him in?

And we don't know. They have no idea. But what we do know from the passage is that Zipporah was or became, I should say, perhaps aware of the threat to her husband's life and why his life was being threatened because she took it upon herself to circumcise the boy right there, right then.

And she obviously, and very clearly, resented doing it. Because we're told she, took the foreskin and touched it to her husband's feet, and said you're a bridegroom of blood to me. I mean that doesn't sound like something you'd put on a valentine card is that's my point, so we were pretty sure she wasn't too happy about this whole scenario. That's all we know.

I mean, we're left wondering and people ask me and write to me from time to time, what's going on in this passage and I go, you know as much as I do. It's just like, read it, you can deduce what you can get from what you get out of it and then that's it.

Well, anyway, the narrative continues saying that, *“²⁷ The Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do.”*

Have you ever wondered it says that Aaron just came out to meet him in the wilderness? It's interesting, isn't it? Knowing that as we do, that the Jews were in slavery. This is an interesting sort of an insight that we read here in this passage concerning the condition of the slavery of the people of Israel there in Egypt. Obviously these people weren't chained to one another or chained to some workhouse where they would come get them, unchain them, take them to work and bring them back and chain them up again at the end.

They still lived in their own homes. They still lived in their own area of Goshen. We know that from later on in the Book of Exodus, because some of the plagues will affect all of Egypt, except Goshen, where the people of Israel are living so we know they lived in their own section. They lived in their own homes.

You can tell here that there was some modicum of freedom that these people had even living under this oppressive slavery that was going on there in the land of Egypt. Now, they were being abused. They were being oppressed. They were in slavery, but it still appears that they had some freedom of movement.

Anyway, verse 29 through the end says. *“Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰ Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.*

³¹ And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.”

So far, so good. There, it says they believed. It didn't take much convincing. And it's always nice when you hear from somebody the Lord knows what's going on in your life and He sees your pain. That's always a very, very comforting thing.

And, it looks very good here, but as we get into the following chapters, which we won't do tonight we're going to learn that this obedience that, that Moses eventually agrees to, to go and to serve the Lord in this way in Egypt doesn't come without significant challenges and tremendous opposition.

And isn't that just a picture of our Christian life? I mean, people so often get saved and then they are so bummed when they start really facing some serious challenges in their life. Whether it's challenges related to sin or challenges, just simply related to their confession of faith.

Maybe family members disowned them. They lose their job because they were talking about Jesus in the break room or... And they're... what in the world is going on? Well, the Christian life comes with opposition.

Father, I thank You so much for the reminders that You've laid out for us in these 2 chapters. We see so much of our lives as believers today and Lord we recognize even, in the responses of Moses that we too are inferior to the calling. We're unworthy and we just are so intimidated by so many times, what it means just to just live for Christ in a broken world.

And Lord we also recognize here tonight that You are not afflicted with the limitations that we struggle with, and You have promised to be with us even unto the end of the age. And that even the gates of hell will not prevail against Your church.

So Father, help us to keep our eyes on You and get them off ourselves. Help us, Lord, we pray to focus on You every day and on your Word and on Your promises and to understand the power of the cross and the suffering that took place there, which is greater than our sin. A truth that we praise you for.

Thank You. We worship You. We adore You. Strengthen our hearts as we go from this place.

We ask it all in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, amen.

Kids are done in about 10 minutes. God bless.