

Approaching a Holy God Exodus 3:1-6

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In Genesis 46, Jacob reached Beersheba on his journey to Egypt to join Joseph

1. That night, just before Jacob would leave the Promised Land, God spoke to him
2. **46:2-4** “And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob.’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ‘I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes.’”

When we come to Exodus 3, over 400 years of silence have passed

But now the time has come when God will redeem His people. And God signals this by appearing to the man He has chosen to lead His people out of slavery.

Question: How is the event in our text similar or different from times the Lord spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Question: In this passage, how does the Lord reveal His holiness to Moses?

God appeared to Moses (1-4)

verse 1

Question: Is there anything striking about Moses shepherding a flock?

Moses’ identification with the Israelites is now so strong that he is willing to serve in the occupation of shepherd, an assignment that no one who still thought of himself as an Egyptian would ever have accepted

Mount Sinai

1. Probably located on the Sinai Peninsula in modern-day Egypt
2. The most likely mountain rises some 4000 to 5000 feet above a wide valley

“the mountain of God”

verse 2a

The angel of the Lord was mentioned in **Genesis 16:7-13; 22:9-18**

The word, 'angel,' literally means "messenger." Yet the angel of the Lord appears to be referred to as God and to speak as God (**vv 2-4, 6**)

The angel of the Lord is not one of the angelic creatures, but is a visible manifestation of God, and would have been visible to anyone else if other people had been there.

Theologians call this a theophany, when God visibly manifests His presence.

Since Scripture is clear that God is spirit and thus invisible, the angel of the Lord must be a representation of some sort.

Since the term, "the angel of the Lord," implies that this One was sent by God and therefore distinct from God, it would not be surprising if the angel of the Lord was a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ.

The Lord will say to Moses, **Ex. 33:20** "...you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." Yet the angel of the Lord was a manifestation of God's presence that sinful man could see and still live.

The appearance of the angel of the Lord indicated the Lord's closeness to His people, and showed His condescension and favor.

The appearance of the angel of the Lord to Moses is accompanied by a miraculous sign in **verses 2b-3**

Nothing prior in Exodus was supernatural

As is so typical in Scripture, the purpose of this miracle was to accredit God's message

It is significant that the angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire, and that God spoke from the midst of a *burning* bush

1. **Deut. 4:11-12** "And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire..."
2. Fire ordinarily consumes
 - **Deut. 4:24** "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."
 - cf. Deut 4:33; 5:24-27
3. Fire is to be feared
 - **Deut. 5:4-5** "The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD. For you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain..."
4. The fire was a sign of the Lord's holiness that consumes what would profane His holy name

5. But there is a paradox. While fire repels, it also attracts (**Exo 3:3**). Likewise, the Lord's holiness both repels and attracts.

verse 4

God warned Moses (5)

Sandals, having been in contact with the ground, were thought of as unclean. Removing them here signifies concern not to profane what is holy.

The ground was holy because the holy God was present there in a special way

1. The ground had been ordinary beforehand
2. **Ex. 29:43** "There [at the tabernacle] I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory."
3. The ground became holy in much the same way as we became saints when the Holy Spirit began to indwell us as His temples

This is the first place in Scripture where the adjective (noun in Hebrew) 'holy' is used.

Although, the verb "to make holy" was used earlier.

- **Gen. 2:3** "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation."

The angel of the Lord will say something similar to Joshua

- **Josh. 5:14-15** "And he said, 'No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, 'What does my lord say to his servant?' And the commander of the LORD'S army said to Joshua, 'Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so."

The Lord will later teach Israel through Moses about approaching a holy God. But first, He teaches Moses about approaching a holy God.

A holy God cannot be approached casually, but must be approached with deep reverence.

God identified Himself to Moses (6)

verse 6a

Moses' father was Amram, of the tribe of Levi

God has not forsaken His chosen people, nor His repeated word of promise. He will act on His people's behalf

verse 6b

Mose feared for good reason, since God is holy!

God's people already had a fear of seeing Him

- **Gen. 32:30** "So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.'"

This fear of seeing God was reinforced at the burning bush

This is how God appeared to Moses in order to commission him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt

Application

We too are to recognize God's holiness and approach with deep reverence

- **Hebrews 12:28-29**

We have access to God and are to approach boldly

- **Hebrews 10:19-22**
- *Question:* What is the basis of our confidence in approaching God?

This does not mean we do not need to approach with deep reverence

This is why the Lord's prayer starts as it does,

- Matt. 6:9** "Pray then like this:
 'Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.'"

Approaching God with reverence starts in the heart, and includes coming with a clean heart and a clean conscience

In our Sunday morning worship service, use the preparation time to bow your heart before God in reverence and to ask Him to search your heart and life

There is no Scripture quite like the OT to instill in us reverence for God. So do not neglect the OT in your devotions!