

MOSES ASSUMES HIS RESPONSIBILITY

BIBLE TEXT : Exodus 4:1-23, 27-31

LESSON 49 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?" (Exodus 4:11).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Exodus 4:1-23, 27-31

¹ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

² And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

³ And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

⁴ And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

⁵ That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

⁶ And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.

⁷ And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.

⁸ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

⁹ And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Signs to Convince Israel of Moses' Commission and Authority

1. Moses feels Israel would not believe that the Lord had sent him, Exodus 4:1;

Matthew 13:57

⁵⁷ And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

2. The rod of Moses becomes the rod of God, a sign to convince Israel of the power of God, Exodus 4:2-5, 20;

Exodus 14:16

¹⁶ But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea.

Exodus 17:5-7, 9-12

⁵ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

⁶ Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

⁷ And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

⁹ And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

¹² But Moses' hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Judges 6:36-40

³⁶ And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

³⁷ Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; *and* if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

³⁸ And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

³⁹ And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

⁴⁰ And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.

¹⁰ And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

¹¹ And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

¹³ And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand *of him whom* thou wilt send.

¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is* not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

¹⁵ And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

¹⁶ And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

¹⁷ And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

¹⁸ And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which *are* in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

II Kings 20:8-11

⁸ And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What *shall be* the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?

⁹ And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

¹⁰ And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

¹¹ And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

3. The second sign demonstrates God's power over humanity as well as over inanimate objects, Exodus 4:6-8.

4. The third sign, water turned to blood, demonstrates God's sovereignty over nature, Exodus 4:9.

II Moses' Reticence and God's Concession

1. Moses recounts his physical incapacities to God, Exodus 4:10,

Judges 6:15

¹⁵ And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house.

I Samuel 9:21

²¹ And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

Jeremiah 1:6-10

⁶ Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.

⁷ But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

⁸ Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

¹⁰ See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

2. Moses is reminded that God is the Creator of man, and the charge is renewed, Exodus 4:11, 12;

I Chronicles 29:12

¹² Both riches and honour *come* of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.

3. Moses shows further reticence, Exodus 4:13.

4. God is angry with Moses but gives him Aaron, his brother, to compensate for the deficiency, Exodus 4:14-17.

III The Return of Moses to Egypt

1. Moses accepts the call and obtains release from his temporal obligations, Exodus 4:18-20;

I Kings 19:19-21

¹⁹ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

²⁰ And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

²¹ And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto

¹⁹ And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

²⁰ And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

²¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

²² And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn:

²³ And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn.

²⁷ And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

²⁸ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

²⁹ And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

³⁰ And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto 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 children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

him.

2. God forewarns Moses of Pharaoh's refusals, Exodus 4:21;

Isaiah 46:9, 10

⁹ Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God,

and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me,

¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Isaiah 6:9, 10

⁹ And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Matthew 13:14, 15

¹⁴ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

¹⁵ For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

3. "Israel is my son, ... my firstborn," Exodus 4:22, 23;

Genesis 25:23

²³ And the LORD said unto her, Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Psalms 33:12

¹² Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

I Chronicles 16:13

¹³ O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

Deuteronomy 14:2

² For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.

Romans 3:2

² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

4. Aaron, in obedience to God's command, meets Moses on the mount of God, Exodus 4:27, 28.

5. God's message and the signs convince Israel that their groanings and cries have been heard, Exodus 4:29-31;

Exodus 2:23-25

²³ And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and 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.

²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.

Exodus 3:7, 8

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;

⁸ And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, 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.

NOTES:

Moses' early life was clearly a preparation for the part he was

destined to play in the great plan of God for Israel and the world. He was to be the leader of a great number of comparatively unorganised people, acting as a medium of communication between God and them to show them God's will. God, from the burning bush, gave Moses a quick summary of what He would do to the Egyptians and for the Israelites at the end of the bondage in Egypt, and told Moses to carry out His plans.

It was natural that Moses could see the difficulties ahead to be surmounted. God told him to tell the Israelites Who had sent him, and Moses requested some evidence that would convince the hundreds of thousands of Israel that his call was bona fide and his authority God-given.

Perhaps, even in spite of the revelations, Moses had little idea of what outstanding miracles God would perform for Israel's deliverance. He had seen the hand of God manifested in the miracle of the burning bush, from which God had spoken to him. He also saw his own hand turned snowy white with leprosy and then healed. And he saw the rod changed into a serpent, and back again to a rod, at his touch, in obedience to God's command.

This rod was, no doubt, only a shepherd's staff, such as every herdsman carried with him on the long and lonely hours while tending the flocks -- but what a history awaited it! It was to be stretched out over the Red Sea to point a pathway through the cool, green depths. It was someday to smite the flinty rock and cause the thirst-slaking waters to gush forth to save a multitude from horrible death. It was to be lifted to give victory over Amalek. It was, afterward, to be known as the rod of God!

When God wants an implement for His service -- be it an inanimate object or a person -- He does not necessarily choose the golden sceptre or the wise and talented individual. Instead, in many instances, He uses the weak and foolish things to confound the wise and mighty, that men might glorify their Creator rather than their own attainments and accomplishments (**I Corinthians 1:27-29** ²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.). God used a rod at this time. At other times He used a ram's horn, a cake of barley meal, a jawbone of an ass, an earthen pitcher, a shepherd's sling, a youthful Gideon, a self-effacing Saul, a shepherd-boy David, a self-condemning Isaiah and Jeremiah, and a humble John the Baptist. A "rod" with God behind it is mightier than the vastest army; and a man with God on his side is better than a thousand without Him (**Deuteronomy 32:30** ³⁰ How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up? **Joshua 23:10** ¹⁰ One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.).

A miracle is an effect produced by the power of God, independent of what we call the laws of nature, for the purpose of attesting the authority of some person or the truth of some doctrine. The burning bush was a miracle, since the fire that did not consume was contrary to the laws of our earthly realm. So was the turning of the rod into a serpent and the afflicting of the hand with leprosy, with the restoration and healing. These were impossible of accomplishment by human means, as the governing power was outside the realm of our natural laws, but possible through an operation of the laws of a spiritual realm.

It took what might be called a simple; obeying faith to cause Moses to cast his rod to the ground not knowing what God's

purpose was; but it took infinitely greater faith and confidence in God for Moses to take hold of the serpent from which he had just fled in terror. Again simple faith and trust prompted him to obey God and put his hand into his bosom to see it brought out diseased and loathsome; and desperate faith to return it and feel the healing virtue cleanse and make it like his other flesh again.

Even the obedience of Moses was tried, for the more his mission was revealed and made clear to him the more he staggered at its greatness. He felt the importance of God's charge, his own insufficiency, and the awful responsibility under which he would be placed if he accepted it. Who, from the natural viewpoint, can blame him for hesitating?

God reminded Moses that he was to trust his Creator in times of great need, and Moses' further reticence brought God's anger, which shows that it was not meekness and humility alone on Moses' part that caused him to draw back. The immensity of the task, and Pharaoh's almost sure refusal of the requests Moses was told to make, made him somewhat unwilling to assume the responsibility. But again God shows His patience and mercy in dealing with men. He told Moses that Aaron would go with him and be the mouthpiece.

This new arrangement answered Moses' objection that he was not physically capable of standing before a royal court and effectually pleading the cause of the oppressed Israelites, but it did not relieve him of the responsibility. Aaron was to be the mouthpiece, but Moses was still to be the agency between God and Israel -- the one who would have the responsibility of obtaining God's will in each crisis. A study of this faithful man's life reveals how effectively he carried out his mission. So great was he, and so endeared to the hearts of the people, that the Israelites wept for 30 days at his death, and the inspired writer tells us that there had arisen no greater prophet up to his day than Moses "whom the LORD knew face to face" (**Deuteronomy 34:10-12** ¹⁰ And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, ¹¹ In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, ¹² And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.).

Moses' life is a demonstration of what God can do with a man who will surrender. Moses claimed he was not eloquent; yet, in Deuteronomy 32:1, he called the heavens and earth to hear him! Even a casual reading of the written accounts of his discourses to the Israelites will show any person that he was not held back at those times by a stammering, hesitant tongue. The secret of it is easily understood. Even though he was naturally slow of speech, yet when acting as the messenger of God and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was found to be a man "mighty in words and in deeds" (**Acts 7:22** ²² And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.).

As soon as he received the instructions from God, Moses left at once for Egypt, without giving Jethro any intimation of the greatness of the errand upon which he was being sent. It is a mark of wise prudence on his part that he kept his own counsel in this matter. Perhaps it was during his Journey to Egypt that he sent his wife and sons back to Jethro, her father, as it is doubtful that they were with him in Egypt since we see them being reunited after the exodus (**Exodus 18:2-6** ² Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, ³ And her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: ⁴ And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my

father, *said he, was mine help*, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh: ⁵ And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: ⁶ And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.).

How wonderfully God worked everything out! He spoke to Aaron, who was in Egypt, and told him to go to meet Moses. Their meeting was at the mount of God -- the site of God's conversation with Moses -- and there the two brothers talked with each other, Moses repeating to Aaron the commands and instructions of and, already fulfilling the word of the Lord that Moses was to be to Aaron instead of God.

They journeyed to Egypt and met the Israelite elders and performed the miracles in the sight of all the Children of Israel. "The people believed" and worshiped God because He had heard their cries and groanings, sending this deliverance for them in their hour of dire need.

QUESTIONS

1. What three signs did God give Moses to show the Children of Israel?
2. Tell some of the instances when the rod of Moses was used.
3. Why did Moses hesitate to assume the leadership of Israel?
4. What effect did Moses' reticence have upon God?
5. What concession did God make to Moses?
6. What did God tell Moses to expect of Pharaoh?
7. What did God call Israel at this time?
8. How did Aaron know where to go to meet Moses?
9. What part was Aaron to take in the appearances before Pharaoh?
10. When the Children of Israel saw the signs what effect did it have upon them?