

S T U D Y G U I D E

Moses and the Burning Bush

R.C. Sproul



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421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771

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The Invisible Hand of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Despite all the hardship and struggle Joseph endured while in slavery in Egypt, he did not fail to recognize the sovereign hand of God in every event of His life. In response to his brother's repentance, Joseph responded, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." This theme of providence carries over into the events recorded in the beginning of the book of Exodus. Just as Joseph's brothers intended to bring about his destruction, Pharaoh sought to destroy all the Hebrew baby boys. Instead, God used this evil edict to preserve His servant Moses and to place him in the one house in which he would have access to all the "wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). This first lesson in our series introduces the mediator of the old covenant and explains the historical context into which God placed him.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 37–50, Exodus 1–2:10; Acts 7:9–22

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To become familiar with events leading to Israel's residency in Egypt
2. To understand the incentives and motivations driving Pharaoh's edicts against the Hebrews
3. To comprehend the conduct of the midwives and God's approval of it
4. To introduce Moses

QUOTATION

At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

—Acts 7:20–22

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Origin of Israel in Egypt

- a. At the behest of Joseph, the son of Jacob and steward of all Egypt, the children of Israel moved from Canaan on account of the famine afflicting the ancient Near East.
- b. The sons of Israel and their families settled in Goshen.
 - i. The land of Goshen offered rich pastureland for the flocks of the children of Israel.
 - ii. They lived apart from the Egyptians and prospered.
- c. After some time, Joseph and the Pharaoh under which he served died. A new Pharaoh arose in Egypt who neither knew Joseph nor respected his contributions to Egypt.

II. The Oppression of the Children of Israel

- a. The new Pharaoh feared the growth and strength of the children of Israel.
 - i. Pharaoh worried that the Israelites would join their strength with external, invading forces in the event of war.
 1. In order to avoid this eventuality, he enslaved the Israelites in an attempt to weaken them and decrease the lifespan of Israelite males.
 2. The Egyptians enforced severe burdens of labor on the Israelites.
 - ii. Contrary to expectations, the harder the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites, the more they multiplied and prospered.
- b. In an attempt to stem the growth of the Israelites, Pharaoh ordered the Israelite midwives to kill the male Hebrew babies.
 - i. The midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, had unparalleled access to the births of Israelite children, and Pharaoh demanded that they commit infanticide.
 - ii. The midwives refused to follow this directive because they feared the Lord, and the Lord blessed the midwives for their civil disobedience.
- c. Pharaoh questioned the midwives on their failure to adhere to his command.
 - i. Instead of responding with an accurate description of their behavior, the midwives lied to Pharaoh and blamed their failure on the vigor of the Hebrew women during the birthing process.
 - ii. God's approval and blessing of the midwives and their conduct demonstrates the necessity of disobeying civil government when its edicts run contrary to the law of God.
 - iii. Truth is owed to those to whom it is due, and the midwives behavior illuminates this principle and the necessity of discretion.
- d. In response, Pharaoh issued a nationwide edict ordering all male children to be cast into the Nile.

III. The Birth of Moses

- a. Moses was born to a Levite man and woman in this turbulent time.
 - i. Rather than cast him in the Nile, Moses' mother hid him in their home.
 - ii. After three months, Moses' mother could not hide him any longer, so she constructed a small ark and hid Moses' in the reeds of the Nile. Her actions demonstrated a devout trust in the will of God.
- b. With Miriam, Moses' older sister, watching from a distance, the daughter of Pharaoh found the ark in which Moses lay when she went to bathe.
 - i. Instead of following her father's edict, she had compassion on the crying infant.
 - ii. At Miriam's prompting, the daughter of Pharaoh called for Moses' mother to wean him, after which he joined her household and became her son.
 - iii. She named the child "Moses," which sounds like the Hebrew word for "draw out."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The book of Genesis ends with the Pharaoh of Egypt ordering the sons of Jacob to leave Goshen and return to Canaan with Joseph.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. The mediator of the covenant between the nation of Israel and God in the Old Testament was _____ .
 - a. Adam
 - b. Abraham
 - c. Moses
 - d. David
3. The Decalogue is another name for the _____ .
 - a. Ten Commandments
 - b. Civil Law
 - c. Ceremonial Law
 - d. covenant with Abraham
4. A Christian must always answer any interrogative leveled at him regardless of the question or the individual asking it.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. A daughter of Pharaoh found Moses in the river and immediately reported her finding to Pharaoh
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Spend some time reading (or rereading) the narrative of Joseph found in chapters 37–50 of Genesis. What does this narrative say about the work of God in the lives of His people? What role does Judah play in the narrative, and why does the author take special care to explain his role?
2. What does it mean to say that an individual, event, or rite prefigured Jesus Christ? How does Moses prefigure Jesus, and what do the Apostolic writers of the New Testament have to say on this issue?
3. Discuss the effects the Decalogue has had on Western law systems (e.g. the Constitution of the United States of America).
4. What does it mean, “To fear the Lord”? What does the Bible say about obeying authority? When may Christians disobey the edicts issued by those who possess authority over them?
5. Are Christians allowed to lie? What is the definition of lying, and how does it apply in the case of the Israelite midwives and their response to Pharaoh?

2

The Burning Bush

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The views in the desert must have looked much different than the vistas Moses witnessed from the royal palaces in Egypt. By all outward appearances, Moses' fall from power and prominence to anonymity with authority over dumb beasts alone seems like a monumental downgrade. Yet, the Lord ordained both of Moses' stations, and each served to cultivate within him the capabilities and talents needed to lead God's people out of the confines of Egypt. In His wisdom, God prepared Moses with the richest learning of his time as well as equipped him with the humility and patience to guide and care for some of the most stubborn creatures on the planet.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 2:11–3:22; Acts 7:23–34

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To illuminate the narrative up until God's self-disclosure at Mt. Sinai
2. To explain the conditions that led Moses from a prince of Egypt to a humble shepherd

QUOTATION

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. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

—Exodus 3:2–3

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Moses' Flight

- a. After Moses had grown into adulthood, he took careful note of the burden of his people.
 - i. At some point, Moses realized that he did not possess an Egyptian origin but was a Hebrew.
 - ii. He evaluated the condition of the Israelites and sympathized with them.
- b. Moses witnessed an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave, and, seeing no one watching, he killed the taskmaster and hid his body.
- c. The next day, Moses attempted to mediate a dispute between two Hebrews.
 - i. The Hebrews responded with contempt and contention.
 - ii. Moses, realizing that news of the previous day's events had spread, fled from before the wrath of Pharaoh.

II. Moses in Midian

- a. Moses fled to Midian and sat down by a well to rest.
- b. As he sat, Moses witnessed the abuse of the daughters of a Midianite priest, and he assisted them in their distress.
- c. The Midianite priest, Reuel, heard of Moses' valor from his daughters and invited him into his tent. The relationship blossomed and Reuel gave Moses an occupation as a shepherd of his flocks as well as the hand of his daughter, Zipporah, in marriage.

III. Moses and the Burning Bush

- a. While tending the flocks of his father-in-law near Mt. Horeb, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush.
 - i. Moses had aged to eighty years old.
 - ii. The bush was burning but was not consumed.
- b. Moses desired to examine this phenomenon further. As he approached, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush.
 - i. The Lord commanded him to remove his sandals, for he had entered onto holy ground.
 - ii. Upon learning the identity behind the voice, Moses hid his face in fear.
- c. God iterated to Moses His intention to use him to free his people from the grasp of Pharaoh.
 - i. His initiation spawned from His desire to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and so that the people of Israel might know Him.
 - ii. Moses asked God what he should say if the children of Israel doubted the validity of his call and orders. The Lord told Moses to disclose His name to the people: "I am who I am."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Pharaoh's daughter utilized Moses as a servant in the house of Pharaoh during his childhood.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Pharaoh offered Moses amnesty when he learned that Moses had killed an Egyptian taskmaster.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. The Bible names the father-in-law of Moses as Reuel and _____ .
 - a. Tobias
 - b. Jethro
 - c. Jeremiah
 - d. Abner
4. When Moses saw the burning bush, he turned and ran away in fear.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. When Moses asked God what name He should reveal to the children of Israel, the Lord answered _____ .
 - a. El Shaddai
 - b. El Elyon
 - c. the Ancient of Days
 - d. I am who I am

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Was Moses right to kill the Egyptian taskmaster as recounted in Exodus 2? Does God's Word address this instance? What does Stephen's speech in Acts 7 say concerning Moses' actions, and how does this influence your opinion on the matter?
2. What does the Bible mean when it says, "God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob"? Did He ever forget His covenant? Explain?
3. Who is the Angel of the Lord? What does the Bible say about the Angel of the Lord? Note well the particular times at which the Angel of the Lord appears.
4. Why did God demand that Moses remove his sandals before the burning bush? What does this say about the holiness of God?
5. In an attempt to look forward to the following lessons, discuss God's self-disclosure to Moses, particularly the meaning of His name, "I am who I am."

3

A Consuming Fire

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The tendency to ignore the work of our Trinitarian God in the Old Testament remains a real problem within Christendom. Christians sometimes attribute the great redemptive acts of history in the Old Testament to the first person of the Trinity, the Father, alone. However, as John describes in the first chapter of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made through him.” Both the second person and the third person of the Trinity (the Son and the Spirit, respectively) worked in conjunction with the Father to lead events to the climax of history: the incarnation of the Son of God. As this lesson demonstrates, the Shekinah Glory played an important role in these events, and the Son of God possessed a special part in the manifestation of His glory to His creation.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 15:1–21; Exodus 3:1–22; Exodus 40:34–35; Luke 2:8–20; Acts 9:1–19

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the nature of God’s theophany in the burning bush
2. To introduce and explain the Shekinah Glory
3. To demonstrate the function of the Shekinah Glory in some of the important events of redemptive history

QUOTATION

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

—Genesis 15:17–21

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Nature of the Burning Bush

- a. When Moses saw the bush burning, he wondered why the bush was not consumed by the flame.
 - i. Moses describes the experience from a phenomenological perspective, using particular language to capture the event.
 - ii. Dr. Sproul suggests that Moses saw the fire inside the bush, as opposed to any other proximity to the plant.
- b. The bush did not burn from the flame because the fire burned from its own power.

II. The Theophany in the Bush

- a. The bush did not burn because the fire was a theophany: a manifestation of God.
- b. Although God is a spirit with an invisible substance, there are occasions in redemptive history where He manifests Himself visibly.
- c. The theophany of the burning bush was “contra naturam”: contrary to nature. The fire was a visible manifestation of God’s glory.

III. The Shekinah Glory

- a. The outward appearance of God’s glory frequently appearing in redemptive history is referred to as the “Shekinah Glory.”
 - i. The Shekinah Glory radiates from the very being of God, and it is overwhelmingly majestic and powerful.
 - ii. At critical junctures in redemptive history, God manifested Himself through the Shekinah Glory and the use of fire.
- b. Genesis 15:1–21
 - i. This account describes God’s oath to Abraham to fulfill His promises to him and his descendants at the risk of His own existence.
 - ii. The smoking oven and the burning torch that pass through the severed animals are manifestations of the Shekinah Glory. They seal and ratify this oath with fire.
- c. Acts 9:1–19
 - i. Jesus’ manifestation to Saul in Acts 9 is a manifestation of the refulgent Shekinah Glory.
 - ii. Similar to the account of Moses, the voice of God speaks tenderly from the midst of the effulgence.
- d. Luke 2:8–20
 - i. The glory of God that envelopes the shepherds on the night of Jesus birth a manifestation of the Shekinah Glory.
 - ii. Similar to Moses and Saul, the shepherds response in fear and trembling.
- e. The Shekinah Glory is not a manifestation of the first person of the Trinity only, but the glory inherent to the second person of the Trinity from all eternity, the Son of God, manifests itself in the Shekinah Glory.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The bush in which the Angel of the Lord appeared was an extraordinary shrubbery.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. According to Dr. Sproul, the fire described in Exodus 3 was in the bush but not of the bush. In other words, the bush serves as a fuel for the power.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Dr. Sproul explains that God manifests the Shekinah Glory through some kind of _____ .
 - a. water
 - b. earthquake
 - c. tornado
 - d. fire
4. The Shekinah Glory appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. On the night of Christ's birth, the glory of God appeared to _____ .
 - a. wise men
 - b. the elders of Bethlehem
 - c. shepherds
 - d. the Pharisees in Jerusalem

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a theophany? Do theophanies occur for specific reasons at specific times and places? How does the burning bush fit into this scheme?
2. What does it mean to say that God is a spirit? Explain in detail, using Scripture to support your argument.
3. Explain the meaning behind the covenantal rite enacted by God in Genesis 15? Why did Abraham not walk between the severed animals? How does this ceremony related to Jesus Christ?
4. What role does the Shekinah Glory play in the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus? In the revelation to the shepherds on the night of Jesus birth?
5. In anticipation of the upcoming studies, discuss the nature of the Trinity, paying particular attention to distinctions in the personhoods of the members of the Trinity. Are there distinctions? If so, why and how? Does this have anything to do with theophanies?

4

The Angel of the Lord

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The imagery of fire normally arouses sentiments of terror and dread. Fire possesses the capacity to destroy and wreak havoc in the worst of ways, and this reality forces us to recall these facts when we think about this powerful element. Consequently, God's employment of fire in His manifestations may lead us to think only of His wrath and fury. While the Bible does correlate God's judgment and condemnation with fire, this element does not carry with it only punitive aspects of God's will. Fire also provides warmth for the cold and weary, as well as purifies mixed, heterogeneous substances. The Shekinah Glory cannot abide with sin and must consume it in its purity. Yet, Christians can take hope in the reality that Christ has borne the heat of God's wrath and purified His people through His Spirit, exposing and giving us access to the refulgent glory of God, which we need not fear.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 14:17–24; Joshua 5:13–15; 2 Kings 2:1–14; Ezekiel 1:4–28; Daniel 3:1–29; Hebrews 1:1–5; 7:1–28

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To examine various theophanies in Scripture and see the place of the second person of the Trinity in them
2. To understand further the Shekinah Glory

QUOTATION

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" 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.

—Joshua 5:13–15

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Christophanies in the Old Testament

a. Although many theophanies occurred in the ages recounted in the Old Testament, many scholars believe that some of these theophanies were pre-incarnate manifestations of the second person of the Trinity: Christophanies.

i. Genesis 14

1. Melchizedek, the king of Salem whose name means “king of righteousness,” blessed Abraham and, as the greater, receives a tithe from him.
2. Perhaps this individual “without genealogy” and from which the priesthood of Jesus originates was a pre-incarnate manifestation of the second person of the Trinity

ii. Joshua 5

1. Joshua encountered the commander of the Lord of hosts, who sanctified the ground upon which Joshua stood.
2. Perhaps this revelation of God before Israel invaded the Promised Land was a Christophany.

iii. Daniel 3

1. Nebuchadnezzar ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be thrown into a fiery furnace for their refusal to worship the idol he erected.
2. Nebuchadnezzar saw an extra individual amid the flames, untouched by the fire, and he declared him to be as “a son of God/the gods.” This one may have been a manifestation of the Son of God.

b. These instances demonstrate the possibility for the manifestation of the second person of the Trinity at important events in redemptive history.

II. The Shekinah Glory

a. Fire plays an important role in the manifestation of the Shekinah Glory.

- i. A chariot of fire transports Elijah into heaven, the abode of the Lord (2 Kings 2)
- ii. Ezekiel receives a vision of the Lord riding in a chariot of fire, refulgent in its splendor (Ezekiel 1).
- iii. A pillar of fire guided the Israelites through the wilderness.

b. From where does the light/fire originate?

- i. Hebrews 1:3 states that Jesus is the “radiance of His glory,” the visible manifestation of the glory of God.
- ii. Jesus Christ, the Logos, is the brightness of the glory of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Lord God Almighty is _____ .
 - a. immanent
 - b. transcendent
 - c. both immanent and transcendent
 - d. neither immanent nor transcendent

2. A Christophany refers to a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus Christ.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Melchizedek means _____ .
 - a. “king of peace”
 - b. “prince of peace”
 - c. “captain of might”
 - d. “king of righteousness”

4. Nebuchadnezzar threw Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace, but they were not consumed.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. God’s chariot of fire remains in a fixed place in heaven, from which he commands his hosts.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus fulfill the roles of priest and king? Prophet? Explain how Jesus is our great High Priest despite not originating from the Levitical line of Aaron (hint: Hebrews 7).

2. What is a Christophany? Do you believe the theophanies recounted in this lesson are, in fact, Christophanies? Why or why not?

3. Who was the “one like the son of God” Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fiery furnace? Does this manifestation of the Lord differ from His other manifestations in the Old Testament? Do the visions recorded in the book of Daniel help clarify Nebuchadnezzar’s assertion? Could Nebuchadnezzar have just been using pagan, cultic language to express this phenomenon?

4. Read Ezekiel 1. What does the vision of the glory of the Lord reveal about the nature of God and His rule? Does this imagery find parallels in the rest of Scripture, particularly the New Testament? Cite your sources.
5. From where does the transcendent, majestic refulgence of God come? Does John 1 shine any light on this question?

5

Holy Ground

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The New Testament teaches that Christians should not neglect gathering together as a body of believers to worship together. Although the form of worship might look different across various congregations and denominations, this principle remains the same: where the body of Christ gathers together, Christ, our sacred, holy Savior, is there. The recognition of this amazing truth should prompt us to reevaluate our preparation for crossing into the sacred realm of our deliverer as well as discourage us from possessing a flippant regard for the privilege of coming together as the body of Christ. Although we may look boldly into the face of our Deliverer because He opened His arms to us in His death and resurrection, we must demonstrate love and respect for God our Savior.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 28:10–22; Exodus 3:1–22; Isaiah 6:1–13; Hebrews 10:24–25

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend the distinction between the profane and the sacred
2. To recognize that Moses encountered supernatural phenomenon when he approached the sacred ground on which the Angel of the Lord resided

QUOTATION

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

—Isaiah 6:1–5

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Profane and the Sacred

- a. Many philosophers, including Jean-Paul Sartre, have understood the plight of humanity as hopeless and hellish on account of the inescapable profanity created by mankind.
- b. Scripture teaches a contrary position: the holy and the sacred do not exist in an inaccessible plane of reality forever out of the reach of humanity, but the glory of God fills all of His creation.
- c. Humanity encounters the profane, despite the presence of the sacred, because, in its sin, humanity willfully refuses to encounter the Holy God.

II. The Sacredness of the Angel of the Lord in the Burning Bush

- a. The Angel of the Lord refused to allow Moses to draw nearer because of the hal-
lowed ground.
 - i. The presence of God made the ground holy.
 - ii. Anything God touches receives an injection of His transcendent maj-
esty, and His supernatural presence touched this particular piece of
ground.
 - iii. This spot marked a threshold: a place of transition between the natural
and the supernatural that Moses could not access.
- b. When the people of God come together to worship as the body of Christ, they cross
over from the realm of the secular into the sacred.
 - i. The word “secular” means “of a generation,” and it refers to all that
exists in the world at a given time.
 - ii. When the church of Christ gathers together to worship as one body,
they leave behind the secular for the sacred.
 - iii. Hebrews 10:24–25 encourages believers to gather together for worship
for this very reason.
 - iv. When Jacob witnessed the ladder breaching the gap between earth and
heaven in Genesis 28, he recognized the place as holy ground and con-
secrated it as such.
 - v. When Moses realized the identity of the voice, he, like Jacob, compre-
hended the sacredness of the place and hid his face in fear.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. According to Mircea Eliade, human beings can never escape from profanity.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. A “threshold,” as described by Dr. Sproul, marks a spot between _____.
 - a. the secret and the known
 - b. the natural and the distorted
 - c. the truth and the lie
 - d. the natural and the supernatural
3. The word “secular” means _____.
 - a. “of a generation”
 - b. “evil”
 - c. “called out”
 - d. “universal”
4. The author of the book of Hebrews encourages Christians to decide whether or not they should participate in corporate worship.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. When Jacob awoke from his dream in Genesis 22, he abandoned the place at which he slept immediately and thought no more about the dream.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the ending of Sartre’s play No Exit. What does the conclusion mean about the existence of humanity? How does Mircea Eliade respond to this conclusion? Does the Bible address this issue? If so, what does it say?
2. What made the ground upon which the Angel of the Lord manifested Himself holy? Do we see this same sanctification of physical substance elsewhere in Scripture?
3. What occurs when Christians come together to worship the Lord as a body of believers? Does the answer lend any type of credence to the importance of corporate worship? Why or why not?
4. Read Genesis 28:10–22. How does Jacob react to his dream? Why does he pour oil on the stone?
5. Take some time to meditate on the sacredness of corporate worship. How should this affect our preparation for worship? What are some ways to prepare our hearts?

6

I AM: The Name of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The majority of humanity maintains belief in the existence of an impersonal, amoral deity that functions in a manner similar to a force of nature. Since this being does not possess standards of morality and, therefore, impose them upon created order, attendants to this view express a freedom to live how they would without restrictions. The truth, however, is that these individuals have placed themselves in the bondage of sin and disbelief, ripping from themselves all hope of redemption from their sin and state of condemnation. The revelation of the Lord in Exodus 3 as “I am who I am,” a personal, moral God, demonstrates the high demands God places upon His creation, but it also offers a hope of salvation and redemption not extant in the alternative.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 3:1–22; Isaiah 6:1–13; Romans 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce God’s revelation of Himself as “I am who I am”
2. To comprehend the personal and moral nature of our Lord

QUOTATION

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?” 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.’”

—Exodus 3:13–14

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The Identity of Moses
 - a. When Moses received the commission from God to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, he asked, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”
 - b. Instead of answering Moses’ question in the manner he desired, the Lord told Moses to put aside His worry because He would be with Moses.
- II. The Identity of the Lord
 - a. After God deflected Moses’ question, Moses asked who God is.
 - i. Paul declared in Romans 1 that everyone knows that God exists, despite humanity’s attempts to suppress this knowledge.
 - ii. Likewise, Moses’ desired to know the identity of the Lord.
 - b. Moses asked the Lord His name because the nature and character of God is expressed in it.
 - i. The Lord responded by recalling the history of His relationship with the patriarchs of the children of Israel and revealing His name as “I am who I am.”
 - ii. In this name, God revealed the personal nature of His character, the excellency of His being, and the perfection of His character.
 - iii. The next lesson will look more closely at the name “Yahweh”: “I am who I am.”

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Upon seeing the Lord enthroned on high, Isaiah cried out in joy and ran toward the divine throne.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. When Moses’ asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt,” God responds by revealing Moses’ true, secret identity.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Theists in the United States on the whole believe in a personal God.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. A force that is amoral and impersonal makes _____ .
 - a. no moral demands on people
 - b. many moral demands on people
 - c. only a few moral demands on people
 - d. one moral demand on people

5. In the name of the Lord, God reveals _____ .
 - a. the excellency of His being and perfection of His character
 - b. His indifference toward creation
 - c. the details of His Trinitarian nature
 - d. nothing

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Isaiah yell when he receives the vision of the heavenly throne room? Why? What do his words say about the nature of God? About the nature of Isaiah?
2. How does God answer Moses' question, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Why does He answer in this manner?
3. Why do people prefer an amoral and impersonal God? What does this God offer humanity? As Christians, do we ever act as if God is impersonal and amoral, even if we know this to be untrue? If so, how?
4. What does the name "I am who I am" reveal about God? Think and talk about this revelation by God, using other places in Scripture to contribute to your understanding.
5. In preparation for the next lesson, discuss the importance of God identifying Himself with people and events in history. What does this say about the nature and character of our God?

7

I AM: The Being of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Human beings like the idea of autonomy. It seems that the entire plight of humanity, as portrayed by the secular world, may be summed up in the search for freedom and independence from any attachment. This notion defies reality, and the very desire for this type of existence plunged mankind into sin at the garden of Eden. As creatures, human beings are contingent upon God for the beginning of their existences as well as their persistence. This should incite extreme joy in the hearts of God's people, for the unchanging, loving, and supremely wise Lord holds our existence in the very palm of His hand, and He is sure to work together for good all things for those who love Him.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 1:1; 32:22–32; Exodus 2:10; 3:1–22; Psalm 8; Acts 17:22–34

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the self-existence of the Lord, particularly captured in His revelation of Himself as “I am who I am”
2. To understand the contingency of all creation upon the aseity (self-existence) of God

QUOTATION

Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being.”

—Acts 17:27b–28a

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The Self-Disclosure of God
 - a. The Lord reveals Himself to Moses as “I am who I am.”
 - i. In ancient times, names carried meaning concerning the nature or character of their bearers.
 - ii. The name “I am who I am” follows this practice.
 - b. Christians worship the Lord not primarily for what God has done (which is worthy of worship), but because of who God is.
 - i. The Lord is perfect in His character and attributes.
 - ii. He contains no blemishes, nor even has the ability to have imperfections.
- II. The Existence of All Things
 - a. Why does anything exist at all?
 - i. Psalm 8 wrestles with the magnitude of this question, particularly with regard to man and His relation to God.
 - ii. Genesis 1:1 provides an answer, stating that “In the beginning, God . . .”
 - b. Before the beginning of all things, the Creator God existed from all eternity.
 - i. The arguments of secularists concerning the big bang and other theories scream the question (despite their reticence): what came before this event?
 - ii. Notice that God’s revelation of Himself employs the stative verb “to be,” used in the present tense.
 - c. God alone is independent and self-existent.
 - i. Creatures are defined by change, but God does not change.
 - ii. Creatures are dependent, contingent beings, relying on God for their existence, movement, and sustenance. God, on the other hand, possesses eternal being in and of Himself. His existence derives from Himself alone (the aseity of God).
 - iii. Hence, Paul may employ this ancient saying to describe our state: “In him we live and move and have our being.”
 - d. If anything exists, it depends upon the Creator for the incipience and persistence of its existence.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. God’s revelation to Moses as “I am who I am” demonstrates His unwillingness to disclose His identity.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. God and all that attends to Him is without blemish or imperfection
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. There is no way to know what existed before the big bang as explained by modern science.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. The one item that everything that is in a state of becoming has with every other thing that is in the state of becoming is one critical thing: _____ .
 - a. life
 - b. death
 - c. change
 - d. fear

5. The primary difference between God and human beings is that human beings posses the quality of _____ .
 - a. contingency
 - b. autonomy
 - c. self-existence
 - d. aseity

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you worship the Lord? Take some time and think about the reasons behind your worship. Should the worship of the Lord involve thankfulness only for what He has done, or does it involve more than this? Why or why not?

2. Read Psalm 8. Reflect on and discuss the psalm. How does the psalmist view humanity in relationship to the Lord?

3. Why is there something rather than nothing? Why does anything exist in the universe?

4. What does it mean to say that God is self-existent? Can human beings possess this form of autonomy? Why or why not? Where would you go in the Scriptures to find this answer?

5. Define and explain Dr. Sproul's argument for the existence of God. What critical challenges does it answer?

I AM: The Aseity of God

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis of spontaneous generation circulates in the realm of scientific study as the answer to the origin of the universe. Something spontaneously generated from nothing into the nascent form of the universe we witness today. The concept smacks of absurdity, and it renders Christians shocked and incredulous at times. How can anyone adhere to such a doctrine? Yet, this ridiculous unbelief should not surprise us. Paul tells us in Romans 1 that “although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (1:21). We should expect unbelievers to deny the truth, and this should lead us to thank our Lord that He shined a light in the darkness of our hearts when we, too, persisted in unbelief.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Romans 1:18–32; Revelation 4:1–11

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the aseity of God
2. To confront the absurdity of the proposition of self-generation
3. To contemplate and comprehend the necessity and transcendence of God, as expressed in His self-revelation, “I am who I am”

QUOTATION

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come. . . . Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

—Revelation 4:8b, 11

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The Effects of the Enlightenment
 - a. The Christian faith undergoes constant attack from secularists, particularly over the idea that a transcendent, personal deity created the universe.
 - b. The 18th century Enlightenment cultivated this mindset of skepticism.
 - i. The “Aufklärung,” or the “Enlightenment” declared that the hypothesis of God was no longer necessary to account for the origin of human life or the universe.
 - ii. Although prior medieval philosophy recognized the existence of a transcendent creator, the thinkers of the Enlightenment threw this off in place of the proposition of spontaneous generation.
 - c. Spontaneous creation asserts that the universe is self-created.
 - i. In order for something to create itself, it would have to be before it was.
 - ii. This violates the fundamental principle of the law of non-contradiction.
 - iii. This represents an extreme to which people will go to deny the hypothesis of God.

- II. The Reason Behind the Denial of the Existence of God
 - a. Human beings deny God not out of intellectual considerations but for moral reasons.
 - i. They go to every extreme to banish God as the judge of the universe.
 - ii. They embrace a logical impossibility.
 - b. The aseity of God refers to His self-existence.
 - i. God owes His being to nothing outside of Himself. He is not caused but is self-existent.
 - ii. God is a necessary being.
 1. He cannot not be.
 2. He is the “I am” eternally and forever.
 - iii. God is transcendent.
 1. God is not transcendent in a geographical manner, but He is transcendent in that He is a higher-order being.
 2. His self-existence alone places Him in a category infinitely above His creation.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The guns of criticism pointed at Christianity mainly target the idea of _____.
 - a. the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit
 - b. the deity of Jesus
 - c. the humanity of Jesus
 - d. the biblical concept of creation

2. The word “Aufklärung” means _____ .
 - a. “enlightenment/a clearing up”
 - b. “darkness”
 - c. “wisdom”
 - d. “knowledge for the ages”

3. For something to create itself, it would have to be before it was.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. The question of the existence of God is not intellectual, but moral.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. Every effect must have a cause.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do secularists attempt to repudiate and refute the biblical concept of creation with such vehemence and perseverance?

2. What was the thesis of the Aufklärung? How did it depart from previous, medieval philosophy? How did it explain the creation, and what place did it allocate to a transcendent deity?

3. Explain the concept of spontaneous generation? How does Dr. Sproul confront this proposition, and what are the conditions that must be maintained in order for something to exist now?

4. Explain the concept of aseity. How does this concept relate to human beings? To God?

5. What does it mean to say that God is a “necessary being”? Is God transcendent? If so, why? If not, why not?

9

A Divine Mission

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Many times, Christians look at the great figures of the Old Testament and romanticize their activities and achievements. The Bible clearly lauds these individuals, such as Abraham, Moses, and David, as great men of faith and substance. Yet, it also paints complete pictures of these individuals, identifying their sin along with their obedience. In contrast, our great Deliverer, Jesus Christ, knew no sin and never strayed away from the narrow path leading to Golgotha, into the grave, and then to the right hand of the Father. As great as our spiritual forefathers were, this lesson clearly illuminates the vast superiority of our Savior, Jesus, whom death could not hold and enemies could not conquer.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 12:1–9; 15:1–21; 25:7–11; 27:1–45; 37–50; Exodus 1:8; 3:1–22; John 1:17; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 3:1–19; 11:23–31

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To compare and contrast Moses, the Old Covenant mediator, with Jesus, the New Covenant mediator
2. To highlight the greater role Jesus played as the “I am” from before all eternity who came to lead His flock out of bondage

QUOTATION

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

—John 1:17

LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - a. The self-existent Creator has planned for all eternity to redeem a people unto Himself in Jesus Christ.
 - b. The Lord has purposed to do this through interacting with various individuals and peoples, including the patriarchs, the fathers of the children of Israel.
 - i. God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans in southern Mesopotamia and directed him to wander as a sojourner in the land of Canaan, a land that God would one day give his descendants.
 - ii. This promise passed on to Isaac, through Jacob, and finally onto the children of Israel, who God intended to deliver through Moses so that He might ratify His national covenant with them at Mt. Horeb.

- II. The Mediators of the Covenant
 - a. Moses received perhaps the most important role in the entire Old Testament: the mediator of the Old Covenant.
 - i. Through Moses' mediatorial role, the nation of Israel was established.
 - ii. He delivered to them the Law, and he led them through the wilderness.
 - b. Moses foreshadowed Jesus Christ in his position over the nation of Israel.
 - i. According to Hebrews 3, Moses served as a faithful steward in God's house.
 - ii. He did not, however, build the house.
 - iii. Jesus fulfilled the office of Moses by establishing the New Covenant, the "house" in which His people might dwell.
 - iv. By faith, Moses liberated the people and led them out of the bondage of Pharaoh in Egypt.
 - v. Jesus, on the other hand, performed the greatest exodus in the history of human kind by leading His people out from the bondage of Satan.
 - vi. Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land, although he was refused access on account of his disobedience.
 - vii. Jesus leads his people into the eternal Promised Land and resides there even now, at the right hand of God, ruling and directing the events of history.
 - c. Jesus, the great "I am," as displayed prominently in the gospel of John, delivered His people from bondage and awaits to return and provide eternal rest.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Augustine names God's declaration "Let there be" the _____ .
 - a. "Fiat of Authority"
 - b. "Divine Imperative"
 - c. "Divine Jussive"
 - d. "Fiat of Power"

2. God called Abraham out of _____ .
 - a. Akkad of the Akkadians
 - b. Babylon of the Sumerians
 - c. Ugarit of the Canaanites
 - d. Ur of the Chaldeans

3. The primary purpose of God’s encounter with Moses through the burning bush was to give him the proscriptions for the sacrificial system of ancient Israel.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. Moses’ performs the same functions of a mediator as Jesus Christ.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. The ministry of Jesus addressed the oppressor, Satan, while the ministry of Moses addressed the oppressor, Pharaoh.
 - a. True
 - b. False

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Genesis 15:1–21. How does the Bible speak about Abraham’s conduct and character in this passage? How does it speak about God? Does the New Testament address this particular passage? If so, what does it say?

2. Take some time to read and reflect on the narratives of the patriarchs in Genesis 12ff. Sitting in a privileged position in redemptive history, how do you see God working to further his redemptive purposes? What special role did the patriarchs play in His plans?

3. How did Moses mediate the Old Covenant to the people of Israel? How did he foreshadow Jesus Christ? How is Christ greater than Moses?

4. In conjunction with the previous question, explain the parallels and differences between the exodus led by Moses and the exodus led by Jesus.

5. Explain the importance of Jesus’ repetition of “I am” as recounted in the book of John. How many times does John record Jesus saying this? What does it mean in relation to God’s disclosure in Exodus 3?

A Shadow of Christ

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Bible contains amazing narratives about miraculous feats accomplished by the envoys and servants of the Lord. Sometimes, Christians get lost in the miraculous nature of the stories and fail to identify the purpose of the miracles themselves. Apart from aiding God's people in loving displays of grace and tenderness, miracles, more importantly, validated the individuals as servants of the Lord and gave authenticity to the Word of God that surrounded them. Jesus, the true, living Word of God, performed more miracles than all the other servants of the Lord combined, and in a span of much less time than God's other tools. It reminds us of the unique nature of our Savior, the Son of God, the Logos, in whom the fullness of God is revealed in power and majesty.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 3:1-22; 4:1-17; 7:1-25; John 3:1-15; Hebrews 10:25

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the position in which Moses stood when God commissioned him as deliverer
2. To recognize the purpose of miracles in redemptive history

QUOTATION

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.'" The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." 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. 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—"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."

—Exodus 4:1-5

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Angst of Moses

- a. God commanded Moses to return to Egypt, present himself to the children of Israel and Pharaoh, and to lead the Israelites out of bondage.
 - i. The purpose of this task was so that Israel might go to Mt. Horeb and worship the Lord there.
 - ii. Liberation always demands consequent worship of the Lord.
- b. Moses doubted his ability to complete this amazing, unprecedented feat, and he voiced his concerns to the Lord.
 - i. Moses feared that the Israelites and Pharaoh would not believe the authenticity of his call by the Angel of the Lord in the burning bush.
 - ii. Further, Moses feared the reaction of the mightiest king in the world, the Pharaoh.
- c. The Lord responded by providing Moses with the ability to do miracles before the Israelites and Pharaoh.
 - i. The miracles were to serve as authentication of Moses' call.
 - ii. The Lord provided two initial signs to validate Moses' authority (rod into serpent; leprous hand), as well as the ability to turn the Nile into blood.
 - iii. By these signs, Pharaoh and the Israelites were to recognize God's special call to Moses.

II. The Purpose of Miracles in Redemptive History

- a. Miracles occur sporadically and in clusters at very specific, important times in redemptive history.
 - i. Miracles occur among God's people in order to validate the servants of the Lord and their delivery and utilization of the Word of God.
 - ii. Outside of these parameters, miracles do not occur in this same manner (and mostly not at all).
- b. Moses performed many miracles in his struggle with Pharaoh to release the Israelites, validating his calling and authority.
- c. Satan and his minions cannot perform miracles.
 - i. Miracles, as stated earlier, occur to authenticate God's messengers and his agents of revelation, and Satan cannot duplicate miracles because he does not possess the purpose or power of God.
 - ii. Satan remains only a magician. He is a master magician, full of tricks and deceit unparalleled in creation, but a magician all the same.
 1. The magicians of Pharaoh performed slight-of-hand tricks to make their snakes appear, but this was not a real miracle.
 2. The magicians, tools of Satan, failed to perform any real miracles and could not duplicate, let alone imitate, the feats of God through Moses.
- d. Jesus' ministry contained the highest concentration of miracles in the history of redemption.

- i. Jesus healed the sick, raised people from the dead, cast out demons, and did much more.
- ii. All these signs, nonetheless, served to authenticate Jesus as the living Word of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. God delivered the children of Israel from bondage, but the children of Israel took it upon themselves to go to Mt. Horeb of their own volition to encounter their Deliverer.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. In response to Moses' query, God commanded him to cast his rod onto the ground, and it _____ .
 - a. turned into a serpent
 - b. blossomed
 - c. grew two cubits longer
 - d. burst into flame
3. Miracles were given by God to prove His existence.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. Miracles occur spread out and frequently throughout history.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. The Pharisee who came to see Jesus as recorded in John 3 was named _____ .
 - a. Nicodemus
 - b. Barnabas
 - c. Joseph
 - d. Simon

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the goal of your salvation? Do you remind yourself of this truth frequently and joyfully?
2. How would you have responded if you were in Moses' place? Do the doubts he wrestled with before God seem incredulous? Why or why not?

3. What were the purposes of miracles? Give examples of times in the history of God's people when miracles occurred and state the reasons behind them (at least on the level of principle).
4. Can Satan do miracles? Why or why not?
5. Why do more miracles occur during the ministry of Jesus than anytime else in history? Describe the miracles Jesus performed. Is there a reason Jesus performed the miracles he did in the manner he did? Explain.

