

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 3:11-15
“Moses’ Initial Objections”

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Exodus 3:11-15

Verse 11

But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

- Having heard God speak his name from the bush that was on fire and not burning and having heard God’s command to go to Pharaoh to deliver Israel from slavery in Egypt, Moses answers God with a series of questions that are designed to indicate the flaw in God’s plan, his choice of Moses to execute it.
- Moses’ first objection to his part in God’s plan is that he has no personal standing with Pharaoh. He argues that, given his standing in Egypt as an accused murderer and a fugitive from justice, there is no reason for Pharaoh to listen to him.
- He is correct in his reasoning. Given his personal standing, there is absolutely no reason for Pharaoh to listen to Moses.

Verse 12

And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

- God does not argue with Moses’ objection. He recognizes that Moses is correct. There is no reason for Pharaoh to listen to Moses.
- However, God points out that Moses’ attention is on the wrong “I.” All of Moses’ attention is on Moses. He lacks clout with Pharaoh. God switches the noun behind the pronoun. He focuses Moses’ attention on God. He will be with Moses. So God’s clout is what matters. God will be the “I” that makes the difference in the encounter.

- Notice God’s promise to Moses; that He will be with Moses as Moses attempts to play his part in God’s plan.
- God promises Moses a sign that will assure Moses of God’s promised presence. Throughout the Bible God provides signs to his people and the leaders of his people. He gives signs to provide assurance, bear testimony, give warning, and/or encourage faith. Moses’ sign is of a strange nature. The sign will only be given as confirmation that God has been present with Moses after Moses has completed the assignment. The purpose of this sign is to elicit faith. If Moses acts in accordance with God’s request he will be rewarded with this event, worshipping with God’s people on Mt Horeb. But in order to see the sign, Moses must first act in faith by accepting his role in God’s plan.

Verse 13

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

- In verse 6, when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, he identified himself as “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” However, he did not give Moses his proper name. Now Moses confesses that he does not know God’s name and asks what he shall say if that information is requested of him. Clearly, Moses thinks that his lack of personal identification with God will disqualify him from the task God has suggested for him.

Verse 14

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

- The name that God gives to Moses by which he wants to be known in Israel is I AM WHO I AM. It is a form of the Hebrew verb “to be.” This name appears throughout the text. In verse 11, Moses applies this verb to himself in question form, “Who am I?” In verse 12, God uses this verb in answer to Moses’ question when he says of himself, “I WILL BE with you.” It appears again in verse 15 where God says “the name by which I AM to be remembered.” It is a form of the Hebrew verb YHWH.

- God’s use of this verb as his name is to show his people in every generation that he is present with them and faithful to his promises. It implies that no matter what, God is!

Verse 15

God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘the LORD, 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, the name by which I AM to be remembered from generation to generation.”

- Moses is told, according to English translation to say to the Hebrews, “the Lord,” has sent me. However, in English translation, the word “Lord” is printed in a strange way. It is written LORD instead of Lord. Whenever the word is printed with a large capital “L” and small capital “ORD” the Hebrew word behind the English translation is YHWH. Thus, correctly translated, God told Moses to “Say to the Israelites, ‘YHWH, the God of your fathers... has sent me.’” Thus verse 15 is simply a reiteration of verse 14. God’s name is to be YHWH, I AM WHO I AM.
- Israel is commanded to remember God by this name forever.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Moses’ Initial Objections*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)