

Exodus Chapter 3 - John Karmelich

A question I like to ponder before starting a project is, "What's the game plan?" In other words, what's the goal to be accomplished?" That thought popped in my head as I studied this chapter. It covers one of the most famous passages in the bible. As most of you know, I love to ponder, "I'm saved, what do I do now?" I suspect most of us would love if God gave us a step-by-step plan of what He desired we do for the rest of our lives. Obviously God doesn't work that way. He wants us to take things one step at a time. When we first seek Him, He usually makes things obvious as if one is holding a child's hand. As we grow in our faith, He teaches us through His word, "Seek Me, study My word, live as a witness for Me, and use the gifts I've given you to make a difference in the world" Then we trust God to guide us as we go through life, even though things will go wrong and it doesn't feel like He's there. For most of us that is old news. What does it have to do with Exodus Chapter 3? So glad you asked!

Moses, the main character for the rest of the book, in effect gets told "the game plan". God reaches out to Moses when he sought Him. God told Moses in effect, "Yes I exist, yes I want to rule over you and I want you (Moses) to lead My people out of Egypt!" If that was me, I'd ponder, "Hey since you're God, why don't You just do it instantly and save a lot of trouble? It's wondering why can't God just deal with all of evil in one big "swoosh" and that's that. My point is we must accept the idea that God's in charge, and do things His way! One of the hardest aspect of living the Christian life is to constantly get out of the way so God can do what He desires through us. That's why He only works one step at a time in our lives. It's not just to accomplish His will, but getting us to trust Him one moment at a time as to do His will at any given moment.

My point is as we read one of the most famous stories in history, let alone the bible, ponder as we read it, what is it that God desires of me? What is my "game plan"? Of course, things change in life. Yes, I believe planning is necessary. I'm not talking about planning out one's day or life. I'm just saying God called us to use our lives as a witness for Him. That means regular prayer, daily time in His Word and discovering and using the gifts He's given us to make a difference for Him. Of course our lives will not always go the way we desire. Of course problems will occur. We can sit there and complain or we can make the best decisions we can and move past them. Anyway, as we study this famous story, I ask we think about our own commitment to God as we study this story. OK enough stalling let me begin:

Let's begin with the fact that the first two chapters covered about 80 years of Moses' life. He'll live for 40 more years which covers the time span of the rest of Exodus along the next three books of the bible. This chapter opens for with the fact the "middle 40" was Moses working for his father-in-law tending a flock of sheep. Remember Moses was raised to be the next king of Egypt. Then he spends a lifetime as a lowly job as a shepherd. For that job, he must constantly move the flock to find areas to graze. At that moment in time, the territory where Moses was, is the Sinai peninsula which is northeast of Egypt. He came to what we call Mt. Sinai, (also called Horeb in the text). It is where the "10 Commandments" will be given later in this book (Chapter 20).

Anyway, while Moses wandered to this spot, he noticed a bush on fire, but the bush wasn't burning up! I don't know about you, but when I see fire I either think of running away or how do I put it out? What Moses noticed was the fire didn't consume the bush so he went for a closer look. God used the moment to literally speak to Moses from the bush. The text says "The" angel of the Lord appeared to him. That just means it wasn't just any angel, but a reference to Jesus in His pre-incarnate state. Realize that in a number of places in the Gospels Jesus said "I am". For example He said "I am the bread of life or I am

the good shepherd". I'm just saying Jesus was claiming to be the voice of that bush, which is also why the religious leaders tried to kill Jesus as He made those statements! More on that point in a bit.

Anyway, the text makes the point that after Moses stopped to check it out that, that's when the voice of the burnish bush said "Moses Moses". The implication is the voice (who again I'd argue is Jesus) knew everything about Moses' life and all he did up to this moment. Then the first thing the "voice" said was for Moses to take his sandals off, as where he was standing was holy ground! It's not that the particular piece of real estate is special as much as the fact he was in God's presence. Later in this book when we discuss the instructions to build a tabernacle to God, I must admit I was fascinated by the fact this book goes into great detail of every aspect of construction except the floor. That idea also applies to what the priest had to wear except his shoes. Again, every aspect of the priest's wardrobe is given in detail later in Exodus except we get no mention of footwear. The symbolism's about approaching God in a way as to so humbly as if we are the lowest of servants. In that culture servants went barefoot!

After that, then God explains that He's the same God that lead Abraham, Isaac and Jacob so Moses can realize that He's dealing with the same entity his ancestors (400 years ago) dealt with. At that point we read Moses was afraid to look as he realized what a sinful person he was to be in God's presence.

Now comes "The game plan": God says in effect He is aware that His people (The Israelites) suffered in Egypt and it's time to lead them to the land of Israel and oh, by the way, Moses, you're in charge! It is obvious after a lifetime of herding sheep Moses was humbled by this and didn't feel qualified to do a task this difficult. (Keep in mind any task God calls us to do, He provides the means necessary so that can accomplish that task! That's how we can tell if God calls us to do something, as in the end we will be successful at accomplishing His will!) The "game plan" involved Moses leading the Israelites back to this same mountain. (There were about 2 million Israelites then!)

Then God gives Moses more of His game plan! God told says Moses to go to Pharaoh and explain who is really in charge and even though Pharaoh won't cooperate, I (God) will win in the end even though a lot of people will use their lives to glorify Me! At this point Moses asks God what's his name. God answers essentially with a verb that means "I am". It's often transliterated Jehovah from four letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The main point is the Israelites will accept Moses as their leader (in spite of a lot of grumbling and some rebellions over the next 40 years). Pharaoh and the Egyptians will lose a battle of wills because God's "game plan" always wins in the end! Obviously, there will be suffering on both sides in one of the most famous scenes in history to play out. The point for us is about letting go of our old lives o in order to be "led" to do His will. Yes it's a lifelong battle to accept His will for our lives as we constantly must battle our desire to do our will as opposed to His will.

Hopefully as we study this familiar passage of the bible, we will each think about ways that we still got to turn areas of our lives over to Him to be in charge of. Life in effect is a long struggle to realize God is right about this or that aspect of the best way to live versus wanting to do things our own way. That's why learning to follow God's "game plan" is a lifelong battle as constantly learn to let go of wanting to do things our way and trusting Him to guide our lives to accomplish His "game plan" for our lives!

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John