



Study Guide: Exodus – Chapter 3

Study Guide: Exodus – Chapter 3

This study guide provides an educational overview of Exodus Chapter 3 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Exodus Chapter 3 marks a pivotal moment in the narrative of the book of Exodus, serving as the divine encounter that sets the stage for Israel's deliverance from Egypt. This chapter introduces the burning bush, a supernatural manifestation that captures Moses' attention and initiates his calling as God's chosen deliverer. Readers should watch for the themes of God's holiness, His self-revelation, and the commissioning of Moses, which collectively underscore God's active involvement in history and His covenantal faithfulness to His people.

Context

Immediately preceding Exodus 3, the narrative recounts Moses' early life and his flight to Midian after killing an Egyptian. This chapter situates Moses as a shepherd tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the wilderness. Historically, the Israelites are in bondage in Egypt, and God's covenant promises to Abraham and his descendants loom in the background. The key speaker in this chapter is God, who reveals Himself to Moses through the burning bush, establishing a direct divine-human encounter. The setting is Mount Horeb, also known as the mountain of God, a significant location for divine revelation in Israel's history.

Outline

The chapter unfolds in several distinct movements. It begins with Moses tending the flock and noticing the burning bush that is not consumed by fire. This leads to Moses' approach and God's call to him by name. The narrative then shifts to God's self-disclosure, identifying Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and revealing His awareness of Israel's suffering. Subsequently, God commissions Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egypt and promises divine presence and empowerment. The chapter concludes with Moses' hesitant response and God's reassurance through signs and instructions.



Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1-3: Moses is shepherding Jethro's flock near Mount Horeb when he notices a bush that is on fire but not consumed. This miraculous sight draws his attention and prompts him to investigate, setting the stage for divine revelation.

Verses 4-6: God calls Moses by name from the bush, commanding him to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. God identifies Himself as the God of the patriarchs, establishing continuity with the covenant promises and revealing His presence.

Verses 7-10: God expresses His awareness of the Israelites' affliction in Egypt and declares His intention to deliver them. He commissions Moses to go to Pharaoh and lead the people out of bondage into a land flowing with milk and honey.

Verses 11-12: Moses questions his own adequacy, asking who he is to confront Pharaoh and lead Israel. God reassures him by promising His presence and a sign that the mission will succeed, emphasizing divine authority rather than human ability.

Verses 13-22: Moses seeks God's name to identify Him to the Israelites. God reveals the name "I AM WHO I AM," signifying His eternal, self-existent nature. Instructions follow for Moses to perform signs and to inform the elders and Pharaoh of God's plan, highlighting the unfolding of God's redemptive purpose.

Key Themes

One key theme is God's holiness, emphasized by the command to remove sandals on holy ground, signaling reverence and the presence of the divine. Another theme is God's self-revelation through the name "I AM," which conveys His eternal, unchanging nature and sovereignty. The chapter also highlights God's covenant faithfulness, as He identifies Himself with the patriarchs and commits to deliver Israel. Additionally, the theme of divine commissioning underscores the partnership between God and Moses, where human obedience is met with divine empowerment. Lastly, the tension between human inadequacy and divine calling is evident in Moses' hesitations and God's reassuring presence.

Cross-References

Exodus 3 connects deeply with Genesis 12, where God's covenant with Abraham is first established, providing the historical foundation for the promises reiterated here. The



divine name “I AM” echoes in John 8:58, where Jesus identifies Himself with this eternal name, linking Old Testament revelation with New Testament fulfillment. The theme of God’s presence as a source of empowerment parallels Isaiah 6, where the prophet encounters God’s holiness and receives a mission. Additionally, Hebrews 11 references Moses’ faith and calling, illustrating the enduring significance of this chapter for the people of God. These cross-references enrich understanding by situating Exodus 3 within the broader biblical narrative of God’s redemptive work.

Application

Modern disciples can draw encouragement from God’s initiative in calling Moses despite his doubts and insecurities, reminding believers that God equips those He calls. The holiness of God invites a posture of reverence and worship in daily life, recognizing God’s presence in ordinary circumstances. The revelation of God’s name challenges believers to trust in His eternal and unchanging nature amid uncertainty. Furthermore, the commissioning of Moses encourages Christians to respond obediently to God’s call, even when the task seems daunting. This chapter also invites reflection on how God’s purposes often unfold through human weakness, emphasizing reliance on divine strength rather than self-sufficiency.

Summary

Exodus Chapter 3 serves as the foundational encounter between God and Moses that initiates Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Through the burning bush, God reveals His holiness, eternal nature, and covenant faithfulness, commissioning Moses to lead His people with divine empowerment. The chapter balances human hesitation with divine assurance, setting a pattern for understanding God’s active presence in history and His call on individuals. It bridges the patriarchal promises with the forthcoming Exodus, highlighting God’s sovereign plan and the partnership required to fulfill His redemptive purposes.