

## **Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 2, Exodus 3-4**

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This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 2, Exodus 3-4

Well, welcome. It's a delight to see each of you here this evening. If this is your first time with us, and I think that may be true. I hope you got the handouts that are out here on the table.

There is a, I emphasize, tentative schedule. We're going to try to stick with this, but we'll see how it goes. There's also an outline.

And let me just quickly, for all of our sakes, go over that outline again. Exodus is about revelation. It's a revelation.

First of all, of Yahweh's power in chapters one through 15. Now, this isn't, these aren't exclusive. There are overlaps among these, but we're talking about primary emphasis.

That takes us up through, as I said, chapter 15, the song of the sea, a song of praise for God's deliverance. But then chapter 15 through 18, 22 through 27, a revelation of Yahweh's providence. Yes, he's powerful.

Yes, he can deliver us. But does he really care about us, our basic needs? And the answer is yes, yes, and yes. Chapter 19, they are at Sinai.

So, in terms of location, you've got in Egypt, from the sea to Sinai, and then at Sinai. And here we have a revelation of Yahweh's principles, the giving of the covenant that shows us who God is, and then the Tabernacle, which reveals God's ultimate goal in all of this, coming down off the mountain and taking up residence among the people. That's the ultimate goal in the whole thing.

Oftentimes, I say to students, trying to trap them, why did God deliver the people from Egypt to take up residence in their midst? Canaan is secondary. The book of Exodus tells us God's purpose in deliverance was to come home. The first step in coming home is to ultimately come home to our hearts.

When we look at that first section, the revelation of Yahweh's power, last week we talked about the need for deliverance. A human need, they're in bondage, they're suffering. People are trying to wipe them out as a people.

But it's also a divine need, because God had made some promises. And the question is, can He keep His promises? And we talked about how that's true for us as well. Yes, you and I need salvation desperately, but God needs to save us.

Now, when you talk about the transcendent God needing anything, you're immediately creating theological problems. But it's not merely God in His lonely transcendence saying, well, if you want to be saved, that's all right. If you don't, that's all right.

God has made us for Himself, and He cannot leave us in bondage to sin and be happy in Himself. The need for deliverance, chapter one, and then the preparation of the deliverer, chapter two. We saw how God used the oppressors to train the deliverer.

And then we saw how Moses attempted to carry out this deliverance business in his way, and that desperately failed. And so, he said, well, I tried. See you.

And went off into the wilderness. But God is a little more persistent than that. So, tonight then, we will look at 1C, the Call of the Deliverer, chapters three and four.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your persistence. Thank you for your unwillingness to let us go.

Thank you that you're unwilling for us to remain in our sin. Thank you that you're unwilling for us to remain in our rebellion. Thank you that you have reached out to us in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and have won us to yourself.

Praise your holy name. We thank you again for your word, and pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, we might together gain new insights, have some old insights reinforced, and all together be better able to live your life, because we've spent this hour together. In your name, we pray, amen.

All right, chapter three. And it, of course, begins on that note of the unburning bush. Moses is on the backside of the desert.

He came to Horeb, the mountain of God. As I comment in the background section, it's called Sinai, it's called Horeb, and there really is no explanation for why the two names are used or why one is used in one place and one is used in another. They're just interchangeable.

So, it's Sinai that he comes to. That's no accident. 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, but it was not consumed. What's the symbolism in a bush that burns but is not consumed? God is an eternal flame? Mm-hmm. What else? Pay attention.

Yes? What else? Miraculous power? But he could have done that, couldn't he? Just setting the bush on fire. He could have gotten Moses' attention. He could have demonstrated that he is the eternal flame, that he has power.

What's the business of burning and yet not being consumed? He's not going to give up. The burning purifies. Mm-hmm.

Yes? But again, we don't have to have the not consumed for that aspect of it. Yes, I think that's it. If God sets us aflame, he will not burn us up.

The devil says, oh, you let God loose in your life, he'll consume you. Yes, yes. He may light up the world with you, but when he's done with you, you'll be an ash.

I think that's what God had been saying to Moses. Excuse me, the devil had been saying to Moses. You don't want to let God loose in your life. You don't want to let him set fire to you.

Because he is a consuming fire, and he'll burn you up. So I think that this bush was a message, especially to Moses. No, Moses, if you let God loose in your life, he will not consume you.

And that's good news for every one of us. Because the devil is not very creative, he has used a handful of messages on the human race for these 5,000 years, and they've worked fine, so why do anything different? You don't want to let God loose in your life, or he'll make you miserable.

Why, he might send you to a small town in Kentucky, et cetera, et cetera. No, God, God is a consuming fire, but he will not burn up his children who believe in him. Yes? I read somewhere that also to get Moses' attention, it was the non-burning bush on fire because the bushes in the desert, I think like our mesquite bushes in our deserts, would sometimes catch on fire and burn and be consumed.

Yeah, I think that's reasonable because verse 3 does say, I will turn aside to see this great sight why the bush is not burned. So, yes, I think it's, from what I've read, it's not that common, but it does happen that those very oily bushes sometimes do spontaneously combust. So, it's, in particular, the fact that it was not being consumed that drew him to it.

Verse 4, when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called him out of the bush, Moses, Moses, and he said, here am I. Does anybody do their homework?

What is Genesis 22? That's the story of Isaac, and this God is calling down to Abraham, and Abraham says, here I am. Yes, Abraham has the knife raised. Abraham, Abraham.

What? Don't you do that. God knows us by name. And when he calls us, he knows who he's calling.

And the calling that he has for us is appropriate to you, to me. Later on in this book, God is going to tell Moses, I know you by name. That's the great truth of the Bible.

I am constantly amazed by the thought that God knows personally every one of the six and a half billion of us on this planet. But he does. That's what the book says.

So, it's not, hey you. It's Moses, Moses. Great Scott, the bush, knows my name.

Then he said, don't come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you're standing is holy ground. Now, what made that ground holy? God's presence. There was nothing intrinsically holy about it.

This is not some sanctuary somewhere that's been blessed with holy water. It's just in the backside of the desert on the side of a craggy, barren mountain. And God says this is holy ground.

Now, what does that tell us about God? Don't make it too complicated. What does it tell us about God? He's holy. He's holy.

And everything he touches becomes holy. The dirt. And it's just dirt.

It's holy dirt because the Holy One is here. Now, I said to you in the study last fall and spring that the word holy in reference to God does not appear in the book of Genesis. God is never called holy in the book of Genesis.

The only two places derivatives of the word appear in Genesis are in chapter 1, where he sanctifies the Sabbath and chapter 38, where Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar dresses up like a holy woman that is a cult prostitute. The only two places. Now, again, did you do your homework? Did you think a little bit about this? Why doesn't holy appear in the book of Genesis? If God is holy, why isn't that spelled out? The people may not have been ready.

We talked about the fact that the snake attacked God at the point of his trustworthiness. You can't trust God. He told you that stuff to protect himself.

Therefore, you cannot believe God when he says you'll die because he's lying. So, Genesis is really having to start at ground zero to establish that God can be believed

he can be trusted, and therefore obeyed. You have to establish this before you can establish anything else.

Genesis did this. Genesis having shown as we saw in three different versions, the Abraham version, the Jacob version, and the Joseph version, three different ways, in three different situations. Genesis has shown that God is trustworthy. Yes, God can be believed. And now it's as though God is saying, okay, now let's move on.

God is holy. It's interesting that this experience of the deliverance, the revelation of God's power, the revelation of God's providence, and the revelation of the principles of his presence all begin right here. Do you have any thoughts about why it would be introduced here at the outset? Ten Commandments Foundation Moses is getting ready to lead the people.

He needs to know God himself. Alright, Moses is getting ready to lead the people. He needs to know God himself.

It's the basis for a relationship. It's the basis for a proper relationship. We can't have a relationship with somebody if the relationship is based on a false understanding of them.

You got to know who they really are. That's why so many marriages fail because we didn't really know who it was we were crawling into bed with. So, God is saying right at the outset now Moses, you need to understand something about me.

Take your shoes off because you have common dirt on the bottom of those shoes, and you can't mix the common and the holy. Holy basically has two meanings in reference to God. One refers to his essence.

In his essence, he is holy, and what that means is radically other. The more technical word is transcendent. He is absolutely other than his creation.

So, when the Bible says he's holy, that's what it's talking about. He is other than his creation. Now again, this is an astonishing idea, but the astonishing idea that shapes the whole Bible because, you see, paganism denies this.

The gods are part of this world. The wind, the rain, the snow, passion, every force you can think of in the creation is a god, and the point is they've got to be part of the creation so you can manipulate them by manipulating the creation. If the divine power is not part of this cosmos, how in the world are you going to manipulate him? What good is a religion where the god the divine is truly holy? How are you going to get that god to do what you want? The answer is you're not.

Oh, forget that. Why did I get into this religion business? I got in this religion business to get what I wanted out of God, and now you're telling me I can't get what I want out of God? Forget it. I'll go to the UK and watch the game. At least I can get a little excitement.

So that's number one. When the Bible says God is holy, it is saying he is the one being in the universe who is radically other than every other being. But that means something.

That means there's only one holy character. In paganism, holiness has no moral connotation at all. It can't.

Because the good gods are, quote, holy, and the bad gods are, quote, holy. The clean gods are, quote, holy, and the unclean gods are, quote, holy. So, holiness doesn't mean anything in terms of character.

That cult prostitute sitting by the road, she's a holy woman because she belongs to a goddess. Is her behavior holy? Well, yeah, it's like the goddesses. The goddess is promiscuous, so she's promiscuous, so holiness is promiscuity.

To which this book says no, no, no, no. So that's the second aspect of holiness is character. When God says you must be holy as I am holy, he's not talking about this.

We can't become God. We can't become other than creation. Only he can be that.

But we can share his character. And that's what the covenant is all about. You must be holy, for I am holy.

What does that mean? Well, number one, it means you don't take advantage of your animals. What's that got to do with holiness? You're remembering that you're not God, and you don't have a right to do with that animal whatever you want to do with it. It's a fellow creature given to you by God to help you.

You can't abuse it and be holy. The whole range of behavior in the covenant is an expression of the holy character of God. So right here at the outset, bingo, take your shoes off.

This is holy ground. I don't think Moses had very much understanding of all this stuff at all at this point. But he does understand something.

This God is so holy that everything he touches becomes holy. Wow. But now, and I'm taking a lot of time here on purpose, he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God. Why does he only hide his face after this announcement? Why didn't he hide his face the moment God said, take your shoes off? Why do I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cause him to say, oh no? What are your thoughts? The promises.

Oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute. You mean our family God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the holy God.

Oh, my lad, we've been taking him for granted. We've been taking his promises for granted as though he were the little God who lived under my bed to make my prayers come true. But he didn't live under my bed, did he? Oh my, what are we dealing with here? That needs to happen to all of us.

It's so easy to get familiar with God. It's so difficult for us humans to keep things in tension. God loves you.

He cares about you. He knows you by name. He's excited about you.

Oh, he's like a little teddy bear. No, the one who loves you could fry you by looking at you. That's love, folks.

That's something worth eternity. But keeping those two in tension is hard to do. Oh, he's the awesome God who lives beyond the edge of the universe, terrifying, fearsome.

He's a friendly little fellow. He was somehow, keeping those two together, that the truth transcended. God loves me.

I had the chance to preach on this yesterday, and a person came up to me after the service and said, I was thinking about a story all the time you were preaching. A little boy with Down syndrome went to a Christian camp. One day, he was running through the camp.

Good news. Good news. Jesus loves me.

That's good news. Okay. Now, faster.

Verses seven to 10. Look at the action verbs here. I have seen, I have heard, I know, I have come down to bring them up.

In verse nine, the cry has come to me. I have seen the oppression. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, up out of Egypt.

What do they tell us about God? These verbs. Yes. Yes.

He is truly omnipotent. He sees, he hears, he knows, he has a plan. He is omnipotent, and he's involved.

That's good news. If he's involved but not omnipotent, so what? If he's omnipotent but not involved, so what? But when the omnipotent God is personally involved with your situation, wow. Wow.

That's good news. But come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, up out of Egypt. Why didn't God do it himself? I think it goes back to the theology of providence that we started learning about in Genesis and the covenant where God has promised this, so God is using Moses to fulfill this promise.

But I think it's that God wants to reveal himself to these people, and that's why he's doing this. Okay. Okay.

Does he have to do it through Moses though to reveal himself? Couldn't he just do it himself? He shows his strength through the weakness of man. Shows the need for relationship. This is not just about zap, the way the book ends.

God is interested in relationships. I remember the time that I was building a birdhouse, and Andrew, who was about five at the time, came along and said, Daddy, can I help? Well, I knew that I would be pulling out a whole lot of bent nails after he went to bed. But I said, sure, honey.

I'd really love to have your help. Why? Because I thought he could build a better birdhouse than I could? No. Because I hoped to build a better boy.

And God could get his work done a whole lot more efficiently if he didn't mess around with us. But he's not as interested in the work as he is in us. Of course he's interested in the work.

He wants to get those people out of Egypt. Yes, if God just did it, what historical record would there be? Yep. But God uses us because he loves us and wants to involve us in his saving work.

Well, we come to the objections, four of them. First objection, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel up out of Egypt? What is Moses saying about himself? I'm not capable. I'm not able.

I don't have the ability. They don't like me there. Well, now, what might we expect God to answer to that? It ain't you.



Yeah. Well, yeah. But I think I would be inclined to say, oh, Moses, Moses, you got a lot of abilities.

I've trained you. I've given you training. Moses, you have to believe in yourself.

You know, we're not going to get this thing done if you're just living in your inferiority feelings. You can do this, Moses. I believe in you.

Not about Moses, is it? I will be with you. Remember, that's what we saw in Joseph's story: that amazing situation in chapter 39 of Genesis. Joseph went into the cistern, and then he went into the Potiphar's house, and now he's in the dungeon.

And the Bible says that God was with him. The issue isn't your ability. The issue is my presence.

And if I'm with you, I can use whatever you have to offer, poor though it may be. Karen and I laughed at the Zitz cartoon this morning. I don't know whether you saw it or not.

You know, it's about a family with a teenage boy, and the father comes with a pretty loud shirt on. He says, son, you think this shirt's okay? And the son sort of looks at it and says, yeah, it's okay. Nobody's going to look at it anyhow.

The father says the best cure for high self-esteem is adolescence. It's not my ability. Whatever ability I have, God can use if we let him.

What's his second objection? Verse 11. What's he saying about himself in that second objection? That's right. That's right.

I don't know who you are. My knowledge is too limited. And I love this scene.

God, I don't know what your name is. I am. I know you are.

What's your name? I am. God, let's stop playing games here. What do they call you? I am.

Now, what are the implications of that statement? I am. God's beyond manipulation. What else? That's right.

I was there before you were. He doesn't have any verb tenses. You remember Jesus did this.

Before Abraham was, I am. And the Jews knew exactly what he was saying. They took up stones to stone him.

I like to think of my high school English teacher, Rose Goodman, being in the congregation, and she would have said, Jesus, you meant I was. And Jesus would have said, no, Rose, I meant what I said. I am.

Past, present, and future. He is the I am. The same yesterday, today, and forever.

What else does I am imply? I exist. In myself, I exist. He's the only one in the universe who can say that.

You don't exist in yourself. Pump the air out of here, and you'd be gone in three minutes. I don't exist in myself.

I didn't say, I believe I'll be born today. Now, my mother told me that she wished I'd made that decision about a month before I did, but no, we didn't bring ourselves into existence. And the truth is, we cannot put ourselves out of existence.

We may be able, by our choice, to cut off this earthly life, but we don't stop existing. He's the one who is in himself. And he is the one then from whom all other existence flows.

The holy one, the transcendent one. He fills this out at length. Now, we've talked about this name before, but let me hit it again.

The name is probably Yahweh. And again, this is not his name in the sense of his label. This is his character.

This is his nature. This is his reputation. And so, in that sense, it is his name.

This is his label. It's a verb built upon the three consonants HWH. Those three consonants have the idea of being and existing.

Most names in the ancient Near East were built like this, as verbal elements. They were a sentence name. You think, for instance, of the woman who saved her husband's life.

His name was Nabal, which means fool. I don't think his mother named him that, but her name is Abigail. Abbey, my father.

Gael is a redeemer. This is a sentence as well. It probably means he causes all things to be.

But we don't know for certain, because when Hebrew was first written, it was written in just consonants. So, YHWH. Those are the consonants.

But over the years, the Jewish people came to feel that God's name was too holy to pronounce. How sad. God wants to be known on a first-name basis.

That's clear from this passage. So, every time they came to those four letters, they automatically substituted the word Adonai, which means Lord. When the Bible says, and I'll comment on this on next week's lesson as well, when the Bible says again and again, I am the Lord, it's actually, I am YHWH.

And that makes a lot of difference. This is not an assertion of sovereignty. I am the boss.

It's, I am the I am. Build your whole life on that. Don't you dare think you are the I am, like Pharaoh.

Okay, what happened then is, about 500 years after Christ, when Jews were being dispersed all over the world because they'd been driven out of Jerusalem by the Romans, Jewish scholars got concerned that people would not be pronouncing the Bible right. So, they created a phonetic vowel system. They could put in marks around these consonants for the vowels so that people would pronounce it correctly.

This has made Hebrew students tear their hair out ever since. They don't have just three vowels. They've got 15.

Every variation tries to lock it in and get it just right. So, what happened? When they came to this word, they stuck in the vowels of the word Adonai. What comes out then in the Hebrew Bible is YHWH.

Now, the first vernacular translation from the Hebrew was German. Martin Luther's German. Now, in German, that consonant is pronounced J, and that consonant is pronounced V, which is a beautiful name for God that never existed.

Tell that to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Then, 500 AD. So, the Bible, the scroll that Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth only had consonants because everybody had it memorized for pity's sake.

Gutenberg did bad things to us with his printing press. We have lost our memory because now it can be easily repeated. Anyway, I say all that to say, to just clue you in on this thing.

When you see, and this is the convention that is used now in modern translations like the NIV. If you've got the name, then you're going to see small caps. That's YHWH.

Now, I say we're guessing at these vowels on the basis of the understanding of it as a verb and that's why most translations are a little bit leery of putting this in print because we're not absolutely certain. I think it's 90 percent certain, but it's not absolutely certain. So, if you see this, it's the divine name.

If you see this, that's just the word for sovereign, Lord. So, all that. Okay.

Say this to the people of Israel, YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and thus, I'm to be remembered throughout all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, has appeared to me.

Now, you see again, that ties into why Moses fell on his face there. Oh, my goodness, the I AM is the one who's given himself to our family across these generations. Astonishing.

Moses, I want you to go tell them it's not your message, it's not your knowledge, it is my identity, my reality that is the key. Well, he goes on. The third objection is verse 4, chapter 4, verse 1. What's his question here? They won't believe me.

God says that's not the issue. What is the issue? How does God answer this? He gave him some signs. It's my power.

Now, leprosy and serpents are symbols in the Bible. What are they symbols of? Sin, of evil. It's not an accident that Moses puts his hand into his robe and brings it out covered with leprosy.

I can imagine him saying, oh God, I can't go to Egypt. I'm a leper. God says, put your hand back in there. Evil, evil is within the power of God.

What's that in your hand? Oh, this is my staff. This is my identity. You know, we men identify ourselves by our work.

I know you ladies don't understand that, but it's a fact. Karen and I always laugh. I tell her I've met some man and she says, how many children does he have? I say, children? He's a carpenter.

That's my staff. Yeah, throw it down. Who will I be if I throw my staff down? If I give up my job, throw it down.

Great Scott, I had no idea that thing was a snake. If my job is my identity, it's a snake. It's going to eat me alive.

Pick it up, Moses. Pick it up by the tail. The tail.

God, you don't spend much time picking up snakes in the desert, do you? Number one, you don't pick snakes up. Number two, if you're going to pick them up, you don't pick them up by the tail. Pick it up.

Okay, God, if it bites me, I can't go to Egypt. It's a staff. It's a staff.

It's a staff. It's not a question of your credibility, Moses. It's a question of my power revealed in your life.

This is the ultimate power if you can take evil, rule it, and transform it. Yes, yes. You can be my straight woman anytime.

Yes, that's exactly what's going on. Anybody can do good things, but can somebody take evil and transform it into something good? That's the I am at work. And that, of course, is exactly what Romans 8:28 is about.

God can work through anything. All right, so comes the fourth objection. We're getting down to bedrock now, aren't we? This is not quite the same as the first one.

It's the opposite. It's my inability. God, you know, I can't talk very well.

God said, when did that start? About five minutes ago. God is getting a little bit exasperated by this point. I think he's done very well.

The Lord said to him, this is verse 11. Who made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh, the I am? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth. Here it is again. His presence.

The presence of the Creator and the operator, if you will. And Moses says, God, I'm sorry. I just can't do this.

Please send somebody else. Now we're at the bottom line. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, is there not Aaron, your brother the Levite? I know he can speak.

He's a motor mouth. That's the New Living version. Actually, that's the New Oswald version.

Behold, he's coming out to meet you. He's on his way. I expect Moses said at that point, you mean you started him coming out here before you even talked to me? He is not only the Creator and the operator, but he's also the accommodator.

He can accommodate himself. He's so infinitely creative that he can accommodate himself to our issues. Accommodate.

I'm not sure I'm spelling that right, but anyway. Two C's and two M's. Okay.

And an O. Accommodate. He's the Creator, he's the operator, he's the accommodator. And in a sense, Moses has no objections left.

Either he's going to flat-out rebel or he's going to obey. Now, verses 18 to 20 are fascinating to me because there is no narrative about a big emotional surrender. I don't know why, but I've got a guess.

Sometimes, I think we make too much in our testimonies about our surrender to God's will. What a battle we had. But how finally God broke through to us.

The issue is, are you going to obey him or not? So I think it's very, very interesting. Verse 18. Moses went back to Jethro, his father-in-law, and said to him, please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they're still alive.

Jethro said, go in peace. That's all there is to it. And that, friends, is the bottom line.

Doesn't matter how long it takes you to get there. Doesn't matter how many gyrations you have to go through to get there. The question is, when you do get there, are you going to do what he says? That's all that matters.

Yes? Your point there: can we assume that at some point, Moses just broke down and said, Lord, I just don't want to keep it? Yeah, that's it—verse 13. Oh my Lord, please send somebody else.

Yeah, now we've got to the bottom line. And at some point, the Lord knowing his heart and thinking this through, you don't know what went on as he said, but he just wasn't giving up. Exactly, exactly. He had to come to that point, I have no plausible excuse left for not doing God's will.

So, if I don't do it, it's just purely rebellion. And I'm not going to do that, thank God. Well, I think that Moses probably was trying to rationalize some of his objections there, based on what he knew as an Egyptian culture.

Especially his speech, because the higher-ups, that fluent, flowing speech was expected. And he did that, and sometimes I wonder, too, if maybe his occupation as a shepherd, because Egyptians did not like shepherds. It was one of the issues in the Joseph story, you know, his people were shepherds.

And I think he probably had some realistic... Yeah, yeah, yeah, he's not just making these things up. These are issues. So, yeah, I think that's certainly right.

Yeah, yeah. It seems, though, like near the end, that God said, don't worry, all the men that were going to take their lives, they were going to die. Those folks are dead, yeah.

In terms of what she's speaking about, though, is this general cultural issue. The importance of fluency and being able to speak in flowery terms and those kinds of things. Yeah, yeah, but that particular issue is over.

Okay, I'm going to talk about hardening Pharaoh's heart next time. That's too long to get into at this moment. But I do want to look at 24 to 26 before we go, because this is so strange.

Moses is on his way. God has said that Israel is my firstborn. Let my firstborn go that he may serve me.

Now, verses 24, 25, 26. At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Whoa, what's this about? Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, touched Moses' feet with it, and said, surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me.

So, he let him alone. It was then that she said, a bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision. Now, what in the world is going on here? Precisely, it has to do with the covenant.

Genesis 17. What is the one thing that God required of Abraham in terms of covenant obedience? The sign of circumcision. We talked about why that's significant.

The erect penis is the mark of power, of dominance, of the ability to reproduce yourself. And God says, that's where I want my mark. The sign of surrender.

Now, Moses is going back to Egypt, and his son, his firstborn son, is not circumcised. They had talked about it before. You say, how do you know that? Because the instant Moses got sick, she pulled out the pocket knife.

They didn't have to sit around and say, I wonder what's going on here. They knew. Moses is going to call people to return to faithfulness in the covenant, and he doesn't think enough about it to circumcise his own son.

And God says you'd be better off dead than leading my people into a half-hearted commitment. Wow. Dare I say, some seminary students ought to hear that.

And maybe some of the rest of them. Okay. Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. But the order of commandment to circumcise was in Genesis. Why would we not get that transcribed now before we got Moses to agree to go? That's an excellent question.

And I do not have the final answer. But here's what I think. I think that sometimes... Well, let me try to say it better.

Rituals do not produce the right attitude. So, God could have said, Moses, I want you to circumcise your son. I suspect Moses would have said, all right, why not? He's the one that's going to hurt, not me.

Sure. So, ritual does not produce the right attitude. On the other hand, the right attitude is not supported by symbolic behavior.

We have reason to question the validity of the right attitude. I wear that thing. A hundred years ago, that would have been illegal in my bunch.

That would have been vanity, but not now. That doesn't make me married. Not even the piece of paper that we have in our safety deposit box makes us married.

Marriage is a matter of the heart. So, if I'm doing heavy work and I take that thing off, it doesn't mean a thing. On the other hand, I'm going on a preaching mission.

And I've heard that the women in that church are remarkably good-looking. So, I kiss Karen goodbye. And I say, and after she drives off at the Blue Grass Airport, does that tell you anything? I tell you volumes.

The symbol is a witness to the real condition of my heart. So, yes, he's done the right thing. He has made that kind of a full commitment, but the commitment is not as full as it ought to be as evidenced by this symbolic behavior.

God is saying that your commitment is actually only partial. Even though you're going, you're not flat-out sold out to me. And if you aren't, then what you're going to do here will be dangerous.

Didn't do what? Oh, no. I think he was too sick to. He's rolling around on the ground writhing, and Zipporah is getting off the razor blade.

Dan? Isn't it appropriate to correlate that with the circumcision of Israel at Gilgal? Exactly. Exactly. Well, you were in the Joshua class, weren't you? But I always like to think of that.



Here, it's D-Day plus two, and Eisenhower has all these men circumcised. The Germans would have been saying, whoopee! But that's what Joshua did. And that's exactly the point.

This army is not going to win this land. I'm going to give this land to this army, but I'm not going to give the land to half-hearted people. Some people read this as saying that Zipporah was the one who opposed circumcision.

Yeah. Some do. And that could be true.

But I think if I were God, I'd get Zipporah sick. But anyway. But that's what's.

That really throws her into being a part of the Jewish nation. She and her father were not Jews. Therefore, if she's willing to go that far, maybe it definitely shows her support for Moses over the next generation.

And as I say, I think the incident shows they had talked about this before and said it doesn't really matter. She knows what to do the instant the crisis arises. Well, okay.

The final thing is they go. He meets Aaron. That must have been a good meeting.

And they go back to the people, and they say, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is going to deliver you from Egypt. And here's the evidence. Watch this.

Watch this. And they say, praise God. Praise God.

Yes, we believe in you, Moses. We believe in you, Aaron. We believe in this Yahweh that you're talking about.

Yes, everything is wonderful. Come back next week. Thanks so much.

This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 2, Exodus 3-4