

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 3:16-22
“God Explains”

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Exodus 3:16-22 (*In these verses, God more fully informs Moses about his plan for the Israelites and the part Moses is expected to play in that plan.*)

Verse 16-17

“Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers –the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites –a land flowing with milk and honey.’”

- The first step in God’s plan for Israel requires Moses to “go.” He is to go to Egypt. See Exodus 3:10. Before anything else can happen, Moses must resolve to take this initial step.
- After going back to Egypt, the second step in the plan is for Moses to assemble the elders of the people. The Hebrew word translated Elders means “bearded ones.” These men were the recognized tribal heads of the Hebrews. They were the authorities among the people.
- Moses is charged to tell the “bearded ones” several specific things:
 1. He is to tell them the God of their fathers appeared to him and sent him to them.
 2. He is to tell them that God has been watching what was happening to them in Egypt.
 3. He is to tell them that God remembered his promised to bring them into a land of their own. See Genesis 15:16 (This is a very specific promise that after 400 years, the Israelites would return to their own land.) and Genesis 46:4. It is important to note that this “promised place” is occupied by other nations, and that Israel was told so from the beginning.

4. He is to tell them that God is now prepared to act upon this promise and bring them out of the misery in Egypt.

Verse 18

“The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.’”

- God promises Moses that the leaders of the Hebrews will listen to him. They will accept him as the one God has sent to deliver them.
- The third step in God’s plan is for Moses and the elders, together, to go to speak with Pharaoh. They are to tell Pharaoh several things:
 1. They have met with their God. They are specifically told to use the name God has chosen for himself “YHWH.” See last week’s exegetical notes.
 2. They are to request a six-day holiday for the Hebrew slaves. The purpose of the holiday is to allow all the Hebrews to travel into the desert three days distance to offer sacrifices to YHWH.

Verse 19-20

“But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.”

- Though Moses will not have trouble convincing the elders of Israel to follow his lead, he will have trouble with Pharaoh. God revealed to Moses that Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrew slaves this six-day holiday without some considerable convincing.
- However, God promises to provide the convincing that Pharaoh will need. He is not specific as to what he will do to convince Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go into the desert. Nothing will be required of Moses or the Hebrews. God, himself, will take care of this obstacle.
- After God is through with Pharaoh, he will let the Hebrews go.

Verse 21-22

“And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of

silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.”

- God promises that his display of power against the Egyptians will not only convince them to let the Hebrews slaves go, He will change their minds so that they will give the Hebrews gifts to leave.
- The Hebrew women are told to ask their Egyptian neighbors and any woman staying in her neighbor’s house for gifts of clothing, gold, and silver. They are to put these articles on their children as they depart Egypt. In this way, the Hebrews will plunder the Egyptians before they depart for the place God has promised. This is the last step in God’s plan for the deliverance of the Hebrews.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *God Explains*. 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*.)