

THE EXCUSES OF MOSES: A RELUCTANT PROPHET; ARGUMENTS AGAINST SERVING GOD EXODUS 03:11–22

Introduction

One of the greatest calls ever given to man was given to Moses. God Himself called Moses, called him to go and deliver God's people out of slavery and into the promised land. This we saw in the former passage (Exo 3:1-10). Now we come to the shocking response of Moses: he fought against the call of God. He thought up every excuse he could against going. He did not want to go, and he objected to going. As Scripture says, he had no intention of going (Exo 4:13). Moses was set on living life like he wanted not like God wanted, set on doing his thing not God's thing. Moses had made up his mind to reject God's call.

How many of us have rejected God's call? How many of us have been called to preach or teach or serve in some administrative capacity in the church? Or as a missionary or evangelist? How many of us have been called to establish a business or set up some estate in order to support taking the gospel to the world? Yet, we have refused. We have used excuse after excuse for not doing what God has called us to do. Who among us has made...

- some excuse for not going?
- some excuse for not preaching or teaching?
- some excuse for not supporting the sending of the gospel around the world?

With bold honesty, Scripture tells us that Moses fought against God's call upon his life. Moses thought up every excuse he could. This is the shocking subject we now study: *The Excuses of Moses: A Reluctant Prophet — Arguments Against Serving God*, Exodus 3:11-4:17.

- I. Argument 1: he felt incapable, unqualified (vv. 3:11-12).
- II. Argument 2: he felt the people were ignorant of God and would be skeptical of God's power to truly help them (vv. 3:13-22).
- III. Argument 3: he felt that people would not believe him (vv. 4:1-9).
- IV. Argument 4: he felt he was not eloquent, not a gifted speaker (vv. 4:10-12).
- V. Argument 5: he just did not want to go; he refused, asking God to send someone else (vv. 4:13-17).

I. Exodus 03:11–12 Moses Felt Incapable and Unqualified for the Task

The first argument: Moses felt incapable and unqualified for the task.

1. Note Moses' excuse: "Who am I, that I should go?" (v. 11). God was telling Moses...
 - that he should go before the king
 - that he should go and deliver Israel out of Egypt, out of captivity and slavery
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Moses was no doubt expressing both humility and fear to God. He was only a simple shepherd, only a simple man. For forty years he had worked as a shepherd in Midian, a desert-like land far removed from the centres of government and affairs of state.

Who was he — a simple man, a simple shepherd — to go before the king of Egypt and make demands? Who was he to go to the people of Israel and proclaim that God was going to deliver them from slavery, from the land of Egypt into the promised land?

Moses felt incapable, unqualified, inadequate: “Who am I, that I should go?” (v. 11).

2. But note God’s reply to this argument. God made two great promises (v. 12).
 - a. There was the promise of God’s presence: “I will be with you” (v. 12). God’s very own presence would be with Moses. This meant that God Himself would equip Moses.
 - ⇒ God would give whatever inner strength and ability was needed.
 - ⇒ God would arouse the confidence, assurance and faith needed to do the task.
 - ⇒ God would lead, guide and work things out.

Thought 1. The great promise of God’s presence has been given time and again throughout Scripture. God will be with us as we go forth serving and bearing witness for Him.

- God promised to be with Isaac

Gen 28:15 *“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”*

- God promised to be with Joshua

Josh 1:5 *“No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

Josh 3:7 *And the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.”*

Deut 31:23 *The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.”*

- God promised to be with Jeremiah

Jer 1:8 *“Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.*

- God promised to be with Israel

Hag 1:13 *Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: “I am with you,” declares the LORD.*

- God promised to be with all believers who bear witness for Christ.

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to*

obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- b. There was the promise of a successful mission: the people would be delivered (v. 12). Moses would bring Israel out of Egypt, and they would worship God on the very mountain where Moses then knelt before God. Note that this was to be a sign to Moses, a sign that he was indeed called by God and appointed to be the great deliverer of Israel. But note that this was a future sign, a sign that Moses had to believe. God was demanding that Moses believe Him, believe...
- that God was calling him
 - that God would be with him
 - that God would give him a successful mission

This should have been enough for Moses, but it was not. Moses still did not want to serve God. He just wanted to live as he wished, to do his own thing in life. Thus he had more excuses to argue against God’s call.

Thought 1. No person is qualified to serve God. No person is capable, adequate, sufficient — not in his or her own strength, not to serve God. When God calls us, we often sense our inadequacy and our insufficiency. We often feel incapable, as though we do not have what it takes, as though there is no way we can undertake the task God has called us to do. But God is faithful to us just as He was faithful to Moses. God makes the very same promises to us:

- (1) “I will be with you” (v. 12). He will give us whatever inner strength and ability is needed. And He will lead, guide and work things out for us.

Deut 20:1 *When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you.*

Exo 33:14 *The Lord replied, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Heb 13:5 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

- (2) God will use us to deliver people out of Egypt (the world) and into the promised land of heaven. God promises that we will worship and serve Him in the very mountain of God, in heaven itself (v. 12).

Psa 22:27-28 “All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.”

Isa 66:23 “From one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD.

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Rev 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

Rev 15:4 “Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

II. **Exodus 03:13–22** *Excuse 2: The People were Ignorant of God*

The second argument: Moses felt that the people were ignorant of God, that they were skeptics and would question God’s power to save and deliver them.

1. Note Moses’ excuse: when Moses went to the people declaring that he had been sent by God to deliver them, he knew that the people were going to ask him a pointed question:

=> What god was it that had sent him?

=> What god actually had the power to save and deliver them from their terrible circumstances?

=> What was his name?

Keep in mind two facts about Israel:

=> First, many Israelites were like innumerable people in every nation: they turned away from God to the false religions of the world. Many were worshipping the false gods of Egypt, and were to continue worshipping them even after God delivered and saved them. Joshua tells us this:

Josh 24:14 “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.” (See note, Exo 2:23-25.)

=> Second, the people of Israel had been enslaved and tortured for almost 400 years and, in their minds, no god had ever shown any interest in them, not enough to hear their cries for help, not enough to save and deliver them.

Moses obviously knew these two facts. He just felt there was no chance the people were going to accept him, not a man who suddenly appeared upon the scene declaring that God had sent him to deliver and save them. The people would be skeptical, questioning, asking...

- What god are you talking about — what is his name?
- What god has the power to save and deliver us — what is his name?

Thought 1. We live in a world of unbelief and skepticism. People are ignorant of God, and they question God’s existence and power to save and deliver man. This fact should not stir us to reject God’s call; rather, it should stir us to declare God’s power to save and deliver people. People need God; they need to be delivered and saved from the enslavement and death of this world. Therefore, we must declare the power of God to save and deliver them.

Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you [to seek and save the lost].”*

Titus 2:11-15 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

2. Now, what was God’s reply to this argument, the argument that uses people’s ignorance and skepticism as an excuse for not serving God (vv. 13-22)? God told Moses to declare ten things to Israel.

a. Moses was to declare God’s name to the people: “I AM WHO I AM” — it was He who sent Moses (v. 14; See *God, LORD*, Exo 3:14-15.)

Thought 1. We must declare the name of God to the people of our generation. God is the great “I AM,” the only living and true God, the only God who truly exists, the only God we are to worship and serve.

b. Moses was to declare God’s identity to the people: the LORD God is His name. He is the same God who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — it was He who sent Moses (v. 15). This point would remind the people of the great promises that God had made to their forefathers...

- the promise of the promised land (see note, Gen 12:1).
- the promise of the promised seed, meaning both the seed of a great nation of people and the one particular seed, the Messiah and Saviour of the world (see notes, Gen 12:2-3; 12:3; *The Promised Seed*, Exo 1:6-7).

Thought 1. The LORD God is the God of our forefathers. He is the very God who has promised the Saviour and heaven to us, the very God who sent the Saviour to the world and who took our forefathers into heaven when they passed from this world into heaven. This we must declare to the people of our generation.

- c. Moses was to declare God's memorial to the people: His name — the LORD God — is His memorial, the name by which He is to be remembered forever (v. 15).
- d. Moses was to gather the elders of Israel together and declare God's concern and care for His people: God saw what was being done to them; He saw their suffering (v. 16).

Thought 1. God is concerned and cares for us even as He did for Israel. God sees exactly what is happening to us, all our trials and sufferings.

- e. Moses was to declare God's past promise of deliverance to the elders: God had promised 400 years before to bring Israel out from Egypt and into the promised land, a land that flowed with milk and honey (v. 17, see Gen 15:13-14; 50:24). Note the number of nations occupying the promised land. This pointed toward the land being spacious, large enough to take care of the Israelites and to give them an abundance of provision. God had given this great promise to Abraham, and Joseph had reviewed the promise with the people of Israel some 300 years earlier. The elders — at least some of them, most likely the true believers — would remember the great promise of deliverance. Great joy and hope would therefore flood their hearts when Moses declared that the great day of deliverance had come.

Thought 1. God has promised to deliver us from the enslavements of this world, including the terrible enslavements of sin and death. Moreover, God has promised to deliver us into the promised land of heaven, the perfect land that flows with milk and honey.

- f. Moses was to declare God's promise to him, God's appointed servant: the promise that the elders and people would listen and accept his leadership (v. 18). Note how positive this point was to be. It was bound to stir the elders to listen and accept Moses as God's messenger and prophet.

Thought 1. Once we accept God's call to follow Him, God will stir the family of true believers (at least some of them) to accept us. Together, as the family of God, we all serve and bear testimony for God. We bear testimony to a lost and dying world.

- g. Moses was to declare God's instructions to the elders (leaders): Moses and the elders were to go to Pharaoh and declare that God had appeared to them and demanded sacrifice, apparently at Mount Sinai, some three days away from Egypt (v. 18).

Remember, the people of ancient history were very religious. The right of worship — the right to worship as a person wished — was often respected. Thus this request of Moses and the elders, which may seem unreasonable to us, was not necessarily an

unreasonable request for that day and time. Even today, various religious holidays that require travel to certain religious sites are practiced by the religions of the world.

Thought 1. We must approach the leaders of the world and request the right, the freedom, to worship “the LORD our God.” We must declare God’s revelation to man, that God has appeared to His people and demanded that they worship Him as “the LORD God.”

- h. Moses was to declare God’s prediction and forewarning to the elders: the king would reject their request (v. 19). God was telling Moses and the elders not to be discouraged by the king’s rejection. God knew all about the rejections ahead of time. They were all a part of God’s great plan for both Israel and Egypt.

Thought 1. We will sometimes be rejected and persecuted by the world. But we must never allow rejection to discourage us. God knows, and He is in control of the situation.

- i. Moses was to declare God’s judgment and His assurance of deliverance: God was going to act in judgment and force the king to free Israel (v. 20). The phrase “stretch out my hand and smite [strike]” is an act of judgment. God was going to judge the terrible sins of Egypt against His people while He was freeing Israel. Note that this was a prediction of the coming plagues to fall upon Egypt.

Thought 1. We must declare God’s coming judgment and deliverance. God is going to judge the world for its sins and deliver the godly for their faith in Him.

- j. Moses was to declare God’s power: His power to cause the Egyptians to favour His people and to rectify their injustices against His people. When God’s people were freed by Egypt, they were to ask the Egyptians for silver, gold and clothes (vv. 21-22). The Egyptians had, no doubt, stolen most of the possessions and valuables of the Israelites when they enslaved them. As slaves, the Israelites would not even have enough food to eat, much less the right to earn a living. They had no right to work for money to purchase clothing and possessions in order to live a reasonable and comfortable life. Thus God was to rectify the injustices of the Egyptians. He was going to strike so much fear in the Egyptians that they would give His people whatever they asked and more, give them whatever it took to get rid of them lest more judgment fall upon Egypt (Exo 12:33-36).

Thought 1. God has the power to stir the people of the world to favour believers, and He has the power to rectify the injustices of the world against His people. We must, therefore, be constantly praying for God to stop the persecution of His people around the world. We must ask God to stir the world to grant the right to live and worship in freedom. ■

EXODUS 03:14–15
GOD; LORD (HEBREW, YAHWEH OR ENGLISH, JEHOVAH)

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.’” 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 you shall call me from generation to generation.”

Exodus 03:14-15

The word Jehovah or Yahweh comes from the verb “to be”; thus it means simply “I AM” — “I AM who I AM.” This means that God is...

- the Self-Existent One
- the God who exists (who alone exists and who can never cease to exist)
- the Eternal One
- the Perfect One
- the Absolute One
- the Uncaused One

The Pulpit Commentary says this: “The idea expressed by the name is...that of real, perfect, unconditional, independent existence.” (*Exodus* “The Pulpit Commentary,” Vol. 1, Edited by H.D.M. Spence & Joseph S. Exell. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), p. 57). (See notes, Gen 1:1; 14:18-20; 15:2; 17:1; 21:33; 22:14; Exo 3:14-15; 4:10-11; 1 S.1:3.)

There are two wonderful facts about the name Jehovah. (See note 4, Gen 2:4; note 2, pt. 3, Gen 2:7.)

1. Jehovah is the God who is personal and who reveals Himself. Jehovah is the personal name of God, the name that shows that God is the God of revelation.
 - a. It is the name God chose for Himself when He revealed Himself to Moses (Exo 3:14).
 - b. It is the name by which Adam and others of his day knew God (Gen 4:26, see Gen 2:4). It can accurately be assumed that God had revealed His name (Jehovah) to Adam personally.
 - c. It is the name which Christ claimed for Himself when He revealed Himself as God (John 8:58, see 8:24, 28).
2. Jehovah is the God who establishes a personal relationship with man — caring and looking after every need which man may have. He is man’s special guardian, completely dependable and utterly trustworthy. He can be relied upon totally.

- a. Jehovah is the redemptive name of God. God is the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh), the God of redemption, salvation, and deliverance. It was Jehovah Elohim who sought after man when man first sinned (Gen 3:9-13). Jehovah is the Holy One, necessitating redemption (Lev 11:44-45; 19:1-2; 20:26; Hab 1:12-13). Jehovah shall judge sin, necessitating redemption even more (Gen 6:5-7; Exo 34:6-7; Deut 32:36-42). Jehovah is merciful and forgiving and He shall redeem many (Exo 34:6-7, see Gen 3:21; 8:20-21).
- b. Jehovah is the covenant or redemptive name of God (Exo 19:3; 20:1-2; Jer 31:34). Jehovah is the God of redemption, salvation, and deliverance.

The word Jehovah is sometimes combined with other words in the Old Testament. These combined words paint a revealing picture of God's redemptive dealings with man. □