



BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

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DISCOVERIES IN THE DESERT

Scripture Reading – Exodus 3:1-21

Introduction

It had been a sharp and long descent from a prince in the royal court of Egypt to a shepherd tending sheep in the backside of the desert. For forty years Moses had enjoyed the luxuries of Pharaoh's court, the power of a royal position and prestige of a princely environment. And now for forty years he had hidden in the barren wilderness living as a shepherd. What a contrast in the two lifestyles. But Moses was not placed the desert by chance. He was there in the providence of God. Moses was part of God's plan to bring deliverance to the children of Israel from the slavery of the Egyptians. He come to the wilderness where he was free from the alluring entanglements of Pharaoh's court, in order to prepare him to become the delivering leader of Israel. Forty years in the desert was part of the preparation of Moses for his great task. One has pointed out that "during those forty years he came under the influence of Jethro, a Midianite priest who was a worshipper of the Lord. Midian was a son of Abraham by his second wife

Keturah as you will find Genesis 25:1-2. Moses married Jethro's daughter Zipporah and had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. As a shepherd of Jethro's flock, Moses learned the ways of the desert. He got to know the travel routes and the watering places. God was preparing him for the strategic task ahead. It was in the barren wastes of this wilderness that Moses made a discovery that changed his life and took him in a new direction that would have historical significance and eternal consequences. It would change the course of history. This discovery in the desert began in an unexpected encounter with God. For Moses this was an unscheduled meeting but for God it had been planned in His Sovereign Will. While Moses tended his father in law's sheep he had

1. AN UNEXPECTED CONFRONTATION WITH GOD. Exodus 3:2-3.

He had led them to the far side of the desert when he came to Horeb the mountain of God. It was there he saw a bush on fire, but what struck him was that it did not burn up. It burned and burned and it was not consumed. The scripture tells us that Moses said, "I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up." And he approached the site but as he did so a voice came out of the bush and said, Moses! Moses! And Moses said "here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God." And so it was that Moses met God in the desert, and made some important discoveries. He discovered first that,

a. God knew who He was. Exodus 3:4. God called to him from the bush, Moses! Moses! The Lord knew him by name. What is pertinent in this encounter is that God came to Moses personally and specifically and called him by his name.

A little boy got separated from his mother in the grocery store and became frightened and called for his mother. A number of ladies ran to where he was calling, but his mother was not among them. And so he called his mother's name Marjorie! Marjorie! And soon his mother arrived and said, "son why didn't call me mother?" He said Mom, "I did but you would surprise how many mothers there

are around here." The Lord called "Moses! Moses!" from within the bush. God knew who He was.

I am convinced that part of the intrinsic greatness of God, is that He knows who we are. We tend to read the greatness of God into the magnificent beauty of our world. We stand in awe at the majesty of the rugged mountains and are amazed at intricate, complex and efficient working of our universe. And our minds are confounded by the limitless vastness of our universe. Our spirits are lifted at the grandeur of creation. In it all we see the greatness of our God, and like the hymn writer we sing, "O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands have made. I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed. THEN sings my soul my Savior God to thee. How great thou art! How great thou art!" We do understand this sentiment. And it is true that all of this is a manifestation of the greatness of God. But what is incredible is that in the midst of limitless space and the complex activity of the cosmic world God knew who Moses was. He knows who we are!!! Jesus confirmed this when He said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet will not one of them fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. In addition, even the hairs of your head are numbered. So don't be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31). This personal this detailed knowledge unveils the greatness of God. A lonely fugitive unobtrusive shepherd in the far side of the desert had unexpected confrontation with God because God knew who he was. However, God also knew,

b. Where He was. Exodus 3:1. Moses was tending the flocks of his father in law in the far side of the desert at Horeb the mountain of God." In that, seemingly God forsaken place -in the trackless fruitless wastes of the wilderness - In the arid deserted colorless uninspiring desert God found Moses. He knew where Moses was even in the "backside of the desert."

Moses was not lost. He was there by intention. He was in this desert country by choice. He was a fugitive from justice. He did not want to be found. He had fled from Egypt because he had murdered an Egyptian who had been brutally

abusing an Israelite. He was in this isolated place of necessity. He had come a long way from his high position as an honored prince in Pharaoh's palace to his humble occupation as shepherd in the desert. Moses was there by intent. He did not want to be found. **But God knew where he was.** There was no escaping Him. No matter how deserted the place or how isolated the location maybe, God knows exactly where you are. The Psalmist David made this discovery in Psalm 139:1. "You know when I sit and when I rise; you preserve my thoughts for afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all of my ways. v.6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.....v.7. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? V8. If I go up it the heavens you are there. If I make my bed in the depths you are there. There is no place of escape from the knowledge of God. He knows exactly who are, what we are and where we are. In the place of isolation when no one is around - In the hour of desolation when no seems to care - In the moment of desperation when there is no help to be found, God knows where we are. This is what Moses discovered in this unexpected confrontation in an uninhabited place.. But Moses made another discovery in this deserted place. He discovered,

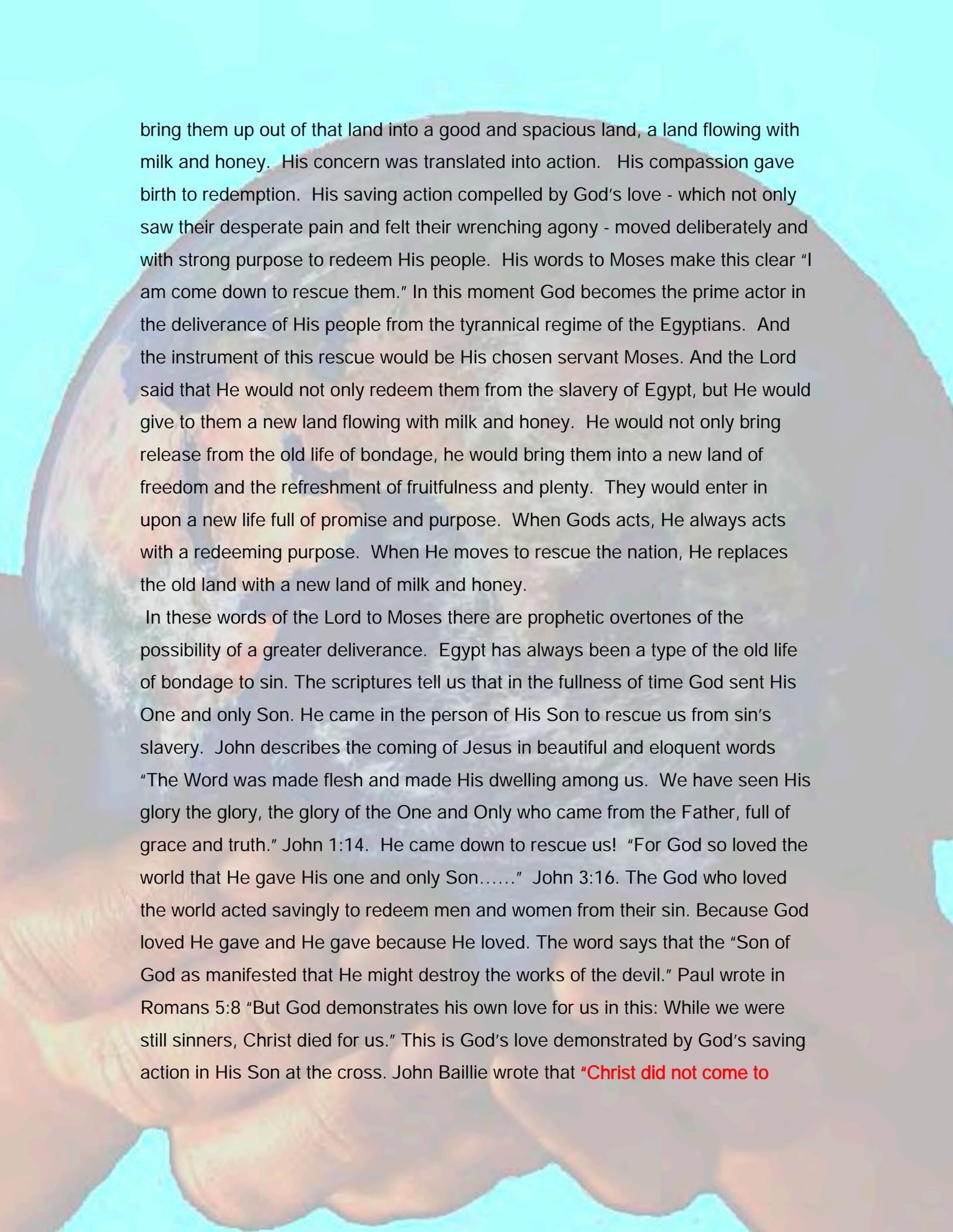
2. AN UNCEASING COMPASSION IN GOD. Exodus 3:7-8.

What filters through verses 7 – 8, is the unceasing compassion of God for His people. The basic reason for this encounter of God with Moses is to reveal His everlasting love for His chosen people. God is open, honest and frank about His compassion for them. The Lord said v.7. "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering, v.8. So I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." The scope and vision of Moses' discovery of God is being expanded here. For Moses finds out that, God not only knows who he is and where he is, but he knows who his people are and the suffering which they were enduring under the rule of the Egyptians. It is a unique God who meets Moses in the desert and openly reveals the depth of His

concern for his people in agony. In this unexpected encounter with God Moses learned that He is

a. A God who is Sensitive. Exodus 3:7-8. He is sensitive to the plight of his people. He was in tune with their need, and He was responsive to their cry for help. In the second chapter verse 23-25 the Word says "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them." And in Exodus 3:7 "The Lord said, "I have seen their misery.....I have heard them crying and am concerned about their suffering. David was conscious of the concern of God when he wrote in Psalm 34:6. "This poor man called, and the Lord heard him. And in Psalm 4:3. ".....the Lord will hear when I call upon Him. The awareness of the sensitivity of God to the desperate plight of man gave rise to a spontaneous heart cry for help. Moses discovered this glorious truth in the desert. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a sensitive God. Furthermore Moses discovered this God is not only a God who is sensitive to the needs of men and women but He is a

b. A God who is Active. Exodus 3:7-8. It was true that God was aware of the misery of His people. It is evident that He was sensitive to their cry for help. There is no doubt of his deep concern for them. He loved them with an everlasting love. He had made fact clear to Moses. However, if God had stopped at this point, He would simply be a kind benevolent God who was aware of the anguish of His people, who expressed concern but remained on his throne. He would be a god who discussed the awareness of the distressing condition of the nation but remained where He was. He would be a thoughtful God but a detached inactive God. He would be an observant God who was divorced from the reality of man's pain. He would be a concerned God but an aloof God. These attitudes are incompatible. But will you note that that God expressed His love for His people and then said because I do love them, and am concerned about, v.8 "I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and



bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. His concern was translated into action. His compassion gave birth to redemption. His saving action compelled by God's love - which not only saw their desperate pain and felt their wrenching agony - moved deliberately and with strong purpose to redeem His people. His words to Moses make this clear "I am come down to rescue them." In this moment God becomes the prime actor in the deliverance of His people from the tyrannical regime of the Egyptians. And the instrument of this rescue would be His chosen servant Moses. And the Lord said that He would not only redeem them from the slavery of Egypt, but He would give to them a new land flowing with milk and honey. He would not only bring release from the old life of bondage, he would bring them into a new land of freedom and the refreshment of fruitfulness and plenty. They would enter in upon a new life full of promise and purpose. When Gods acts, He always acts with a redeeming purpose. When He moves to rescue the nation, He replaces the old land with a new land of milk and honey.

In these words of the Lord to Moses there are prophetic overtones of the possibility of a greater deliverance. Egypt has always been a type of the old life of bondage to sin. The scriptures tell us that in the fullness of time God sent His One and only Son. He came in the person of His Son to rescue us from sin's slavery. John describes the coming of Jesus in beautiful and eloquent words "The Word was made flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory the glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14. He came down to rescue us! "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son....." John 3:16. The God who loved the world acted savingly to redeem men and women from their sin. Because God loved He gave and He gave because He loved. The word says that the "Son of God as manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." Paul wrote in Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This is God's love demonstrated by God's saving action in His Son at the cross. John Baillie wrote that **"Christ did not come to**

earth to tell us merely what we ought to do; he came to do something for us. He came not merely to exhort but to help. He did not come to give us good advice. That, if it were no more than that, was possibly not a thing of which we stood greatly in need, for there are always plenty of people who are ready for their advice. Advice is cheap, but what Christ offered us was infinitely costly. It was the power of God to salvation." Full salvation which is God's gift to us was bought at a great price. It was the price of the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says "we have redeemed by the Blood of the Cross." God acted on our behalf in the person of His One and Only Son. He came down from heaven to save us. It was in the wilderness that Moses discovered that the God of the burning bush was a concerned and redeeming God. Finally, Moses discovered

3. THE UNCOMPROMISING CHARACTER OF GOD. Exodus 3:6, 12, 14.

The striking feature of the story is that God revealed Himself to Moses. God laid His hand on Moses for a tremendous task. He was calling him out of obscurity to become a man of destiny. He was God's chosen instrument to lead the Children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. He was to play a significant role in the ultimate purposes of God to bring salvation to the world. It is important to note what kind of man God chose to do this. He had a deep sense of inadequacy bordering on a paralyzing low self-esteem. To crown it all he stuttered. How could he undertake to obey God's call and fulfill the assignment that God had planned for him? But God's commission to Moses was unmistakable, (Exodus 3:10). "So now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." What is clear in the response of Moses to the command of God is that while he made excuses, he wanted assurances he could trust. He needed foundations on which his faith could rest. He must have resources on which he could rely. There must be an authority and power that would give backing and support. And God's solution to the problem which Moses had was to reveal Himself in a significant way. He said to Moses "I am who I am! This is what you are to say the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." Ex 3:14.

What did God reveal to Moses concerning His character? What question arises as to what kind of God is He who commissions Moses to take on this responsibility? God reveals the perfection of His character to Moses. He reveals the attributes which Moses needed know if he was going to fulfill God's purposes for him. He showed Moses that He was completely trust worthy. First of all God revealed that He is,

a. Eternally Sufficient. Exodus 3: 14. He said "I Am who I Am." "I Am" is a name of God and expresses the eternal sufficiency of God. The Lord is emphasizing at least three attributes in this expression of His name. First,

i. His Eternality. Exodus 3:14-15. Time has no effect on Him. It has no impact on Him. It has no corrosive powers on Him. He does not age for He transcends time and therefore is indestructible. Note what He says Exodus 3:15. "I am 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 by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation." The point is that Abraham had moved beyond the limits of time, Isaac had disappeared into eternity forever and Jacob had passed from the stage of life. And God was the God of them all. While they had gone God was still the eternal one. He is the great "I AM" the one who lives in the eternal present. Then God reveals,

ii. His Fidelity. Exodus 3:14-15. These verses are a testimony to the unchanging faithfulness of God. His faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the assurance that He would be faithful to Moses in his great assignment. Moses needed to have this confidence for his mission. He wanted the assurance that the God of the burning bush was God of their fathers. He was faithful to them all. But God also manifested,

iii. His Authority. Exodus 3:14-15. As one has correctly pointed out the name "I Am" means that God is the "creator of all, who caused all things to be, will make things happen." When God reveals himself as the great "I Am" He is telling Moses that He will make things happen. Considering what Moses faced, this

was the Divine promise and assurance that the impossible would become possible.

Lloyd Ogilvie met an old friend one day and asked him how he was. He did not get the answer he expected, for his friend said that he was not doing very well. His friend saw Lloyd's look of alarm and so he went to explain some difficult experiences he was going through had been the cause of losing his grip on the assurance that God cares and would do something to help him. Then he said "What I have been through has forced me to face the fact that I don't know God very well. I really wonder if He is all-powerful when you need Him." This is what Moses wanted to know, and God said to him "I will cause to happen what I cause to happen." To Moses this meant he had met the God of the impossible. This God of the burning bush is the God who would make happen what seemed impossible. God moves in the dimensions of what the human mind conceives to be the impossible to bring the possible. "The most impossible thing Moses could imagine was that he could ever get the people out of Egypt." But this revelation of God gave Moses the assurance, hope and confidence that he could move forward to fulfill God's will. The God he obeyed was the God who would make this happen. Moses now knew that the God of the burning bush was eternally sufficient. But he was also,

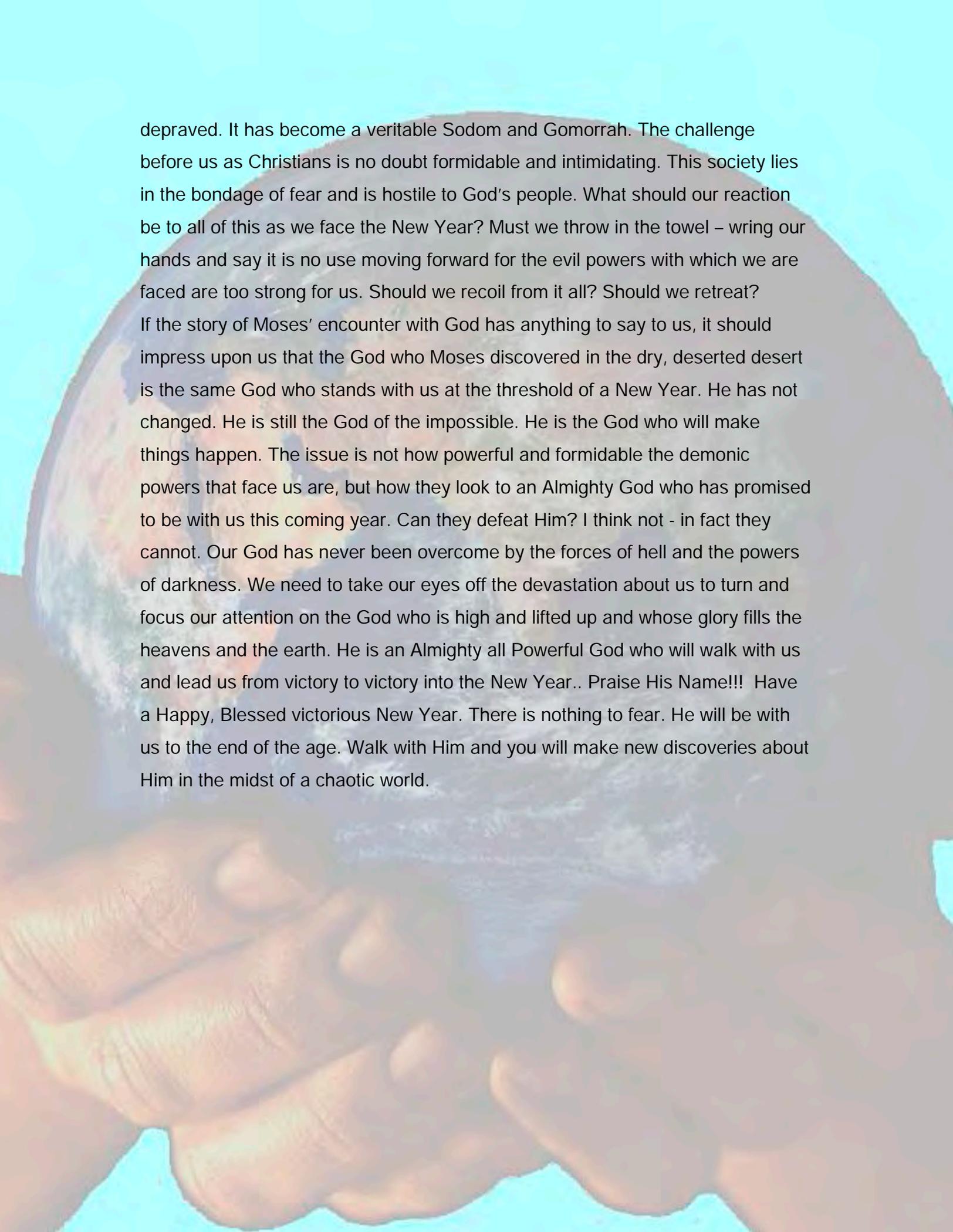
b. Flawlessly Holy. Exodus 3:5. God said to Moses who approached the burning bush, "Do not come any closer, Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." God's presence was a holy presence. Holiness is not simply an attribute of God. It is who God is. It was an ordinary bush but it was ablaze with the holy fire of God's presence. It was just common soil, but the soil of the desert became holy ground because God was there. Here was a strong reminder that to Moses the God of compassion, power, faithfulness and sufficiency was a holy God. It was also a reminder that if God was to have a relationship with His people, the basis of that relationship was to be a holy relationship. It was not only to be the basis of that relationship; it was to be the standard by which his people would be required to conduct themselves, hence

the giving of the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel. These commandments were an expression of who God is and what life style He requires. The danger that Israel faced was that they might adapt to the pagan cultural religious culture and the people with whom they would come in contact. As we trace the history of God's people we discover that they they did ingest pagan thought and acts of worship which turned them away from the true God. And that which brought them back into the purposes of God was the directing light of God's holiness. The standard by which their life style would be judged was the holiness of God. The standard was not an intellectual holiness or how we think we should live. It was not emotional holiness or how we feel we should live. It was not a cultural holiness or the standard by which the culture sets down as the norm. This is a reminder that as Jerry Bridges said, "This call to a holy life is based on the fact that God Himself is holy. Because God is holy, he requires that we be holy. Bridges continued that many Christians have what we might call a "cultural holiness." They adapt to the character and behavior pattern of Christians around them. As the Christian culture around them is more or less holy, so these Christians are more or less holy. However, God has not called us to be like those around us. He has called us to be like Himself. Holiness is nothing less than conformity to the character of God." It is the Spirit of Christ revealing itself in the life and character of the Child of God. Moses discovered the holiness of God in the desert.

Conclusion

God met with Moses in the wilderness. Ogilvie says the gripping message of the opening chapter of Exodus, is that very time the Hebrews were ready to give up, God was preparing Moses to lead them out of bondage. The message is that God knows who and where we are and does not forget us. It was in the fullness of time that God sent His Son. He had not forgotten the plight of man.

We are facing another new year with its challenges, difficulties, hardships and mystery. The world in which we live is a mass of turmoil and relative values. The world is in grip of the evil one and humanity is becoming more and more



depraved. It has become a veritable Sodom and Gomorrah. The challenge before us as Christians is no doubt formidable and intimidating. This society lies in the bondage of fear and is hostile to God's people. What should our reaction be to all of this as we face the New Year? Must we throw in the towel – wring our hands and say it is no use moving forward for the evil powers with which we are faced are too strong for us. Should we recoil from it all? Should we retreat? If the story of Moses' encounter with God has anything to say to us, it should impress upon us that the God who Moses discovered in the dry, deserted desert is the same God who stands with us at the threshold of a New Year. He has not changed. He is still the God of the impossible. He is the God who will make things happen. The issue is not how powerful and formidable the demonic powers that face us are, but how they look to an Almighty God who has promised to be with us this coming year. Can they defeat Him? I think not - in fact they cannot. Our God has never been overcome by the forces of hell and the powers of darkness. We need to take our eyes off the devastation about us to turn and focus our attention on the God who is high and lifted up and whose glory fills the heavens and the earth. He is an Almighty all Powerful God who will walk with us and lead us from victory to victory into the New Year.. Praise His Name!!! Have a Happy, Blessed victorious New Year. There is nothing to fear. He will be with us to the end of the age. Walk with Him and you will make new discoveries about Him in the midst of a chaotic world.



