

## Reformation Fellowship Notes • November 29, 2015

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### Handout #8

### Exodus 4:24–26

#### I. Introduction

- A. Since I have not taken questions for two weeks, I am going to start by talking about two verses, then I will take questions, and if there are not many questions, I will continue on in the text.
- B. Moses spent 40 years in Midian as a shepherd.
  - 1. God appeared to him in a burning bush.
  - 2. God told Moses that he had, after 400 years, heard the cries of his people and was going to free them from their bondage.
  - 3. Then God told Moses that Moses was the one who would implement this plan.
  - 4. Moses listed four concerns:
    - a) Who am I?
      - (1) God's response: I will be with you.
    - b) Who will I say sent me?
      - (1) God's response: The God of existence.
    - c) What if they won't listen to me, follow me?
      - (1) God gave three signs: Maybe they will listen to them.
    - d) I am not eloquent.
      - (1) God's response: I am the one who made your mouth; you will say the right things.
    - e) Moses' reply: Send whomever you want.
      - (1) God's response: I am sending you, but I will also send your brother Aaron who can speak for you.
  - 5. Moses informed his father-in-law that he was leaving.
    - a) Moses got his family ready to go.
    - b) God told Moses Pharaoh would resist letting the people go.
      - (1) Since Pharaoh will not let God's first-born go, God will kill Pharaoh's first-born son.
  - 6. What immediately follows is one of the weirdest passages in the Old Testament.

#### II. Exodus 4:24-26

- A. Many different interpretations have been offered.
  - 1. Some terms are not well attested:
    - a) "bridegroom of blood"
    - b) "circumcision"
  - 2. Antecedents to the pronouns are not clear.

- a) Moses is not mentioned.
3. The account doesn't seem to fit into the context.
- B. My best guess
  1. What I think is happening:
    - a) Loaded terms:
      - (1) "On the way"
        - (a) "Looking forward to the promises of God"
      - (2) God "met" Moses.
        - (a) "Met" is an unexpected encounter.
          - (i) Could be either good or bad
    - b) In this case, God met Moses and "sought to kill him."
      - (1) God had told Moses that those who "sought to kill him" were dead.
    - c) God most likely afflicted Moses with a fatal disease.
  2. Zipporah circumcised Gershom.
    - (1) He was not already circumcised.
      - (a) We don't know how old he was.
      - (b) A delayed circumcision is not unprecedented.
        - (i) Those born in the desert were not circumcised until they were about to enter the land. (Joshua 5:2-7)
        - (ii) Perhaps it was too dangerous in the dust of nomadic life.
      - (c) I will suggest another possible reason he was not circumcised shortly.
    - (2) Moses was perhaps too sick to do it.
      - (a) This explains why Zipporah did the operation.
  3. She touched the foreskin to Moses' feet.
  4. She called Moses her "bridegroom of blood."
- C. Lexical ties
  1. There are terms used here that tie it literarily to passages before and after.
    - a) "Met"
      - (1) God met Moses.
      - (2) Moses met Aaron.
    - b) "First-born"
      - (1) God will kill first-born of Pharaoh.
      - (2) Gershom is first-born of Moses.
    - c) "Sought to kill"
      - (1) Pharaoh sought to kill Moses.
      - (2) God sought to kill Moses.
  2. Sometimes these appear to be exegetically significant and sometimes not.
- D. Why I think this passage is here.
  1. A contrast of fates of the first-born

- a) Pharaoh's first-born would have to die because of Pharaoh's stubbornness.
  - b) Moses' first-born would have to shed blood to save Moses' life.
2. Moses is being warned to take his mission seriously.
- a) Bears a resemblance to the account of Balaam. (See Numbers 22:15-35.)
    - (1) God did this to impress upon Balaam the importance of doing just as he was told by God. Balaam had been sent on a mission by God.
    - (2) God put Balaam in a life threatening situation.
    - (3) That situation proved that much was happening that Balaam could not see.
    - (4) Therefore Balaam was obligated to do just as God instructed.
    - (5) This had to be impressed upon Balaam before he could be allowed to continue his mission.
  - b) Similarly, God had sent Moses on a mission.
    - (1) Moses is in a life threatening situation.
    - (2) He needs to take his mission seriously.
3. Moses had to fully identify with the Israelites.
- a) Moses had ceased to identify with the Israelites.
    - (1) He was so stung by the rejection of his role [by some Israelites in Egypt] that he rejected Israel.
    - (2) So he did not circumcise his own son.
  - b) Moses has to give up his alienation from the Israelites and fully identify with them and their afflictions.
  - c) But to play the role God wants him to play, Moses and his family have to be a part of Israel.
    - (1) God is forcing Moses to choose to identify with the Israelites.
4. This is Moses' conversion experience.
- a) He almost died.
  - b) He lived by virtue of his first-born's shed blood.
    - (1) It is as if Zipporah got her husband back from the dead (her bridegroom again) because of Gershom's sacrifice (bride-groom of blood).
  - c) This marks the time from which Moses is "all in" with respect to his mission.

### **III. Questions**