

Series: Questions

Title: What is that in Thine Hand?

Text: Exodus 4: 2

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Exodus 4: 2: And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

Here we have another question that God asked a man. It is our title: **What is that in thine hand?**

Let's get the context. At this time, Moses was on the backside of the desert tending his father-in-law's sheep. Christ the Angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

Exodus 3: 7: And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

1. GOD had a people called Israel. God chose them. They were God's own people. In time, his people fell into slavery in Egypt. But they still belonged to God. His interest in them had not diminished in any degree. Well, God has a people who are his spiritual Israel—his elect. God chose them unto salvation in Christ. They are God's own. In time, God's elect fell into slavery by Adam's one transgression: under the bondage of the curse of the law and under the bondage of our sin nature when we were conceived in sin. But God's elect still belong to God. His interest in them shall never diminish in any degree.

2. The Lord's purpose in choosing and sending Moses to Egypt is the same as God choosing and sending his preacher.

Exodus 3: 8: And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;...10: Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. 11: And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Pharaoh was the most powerful ruler of the mightiest nation on earth. Moses was not a mighty man, he was nobody from nowhere.

1 Corinthians 1: 27: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;...weak things...to confound the...mighty;...29:That no flesh should glory in his presence.

3. So the LORD assured Moses he would go with him and bring him again to that place.

Exodus 3: 12: And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

The Lord Jesus told his disciples, and assures his servants today, "lo, I am with you always,...(Mt 28: 20).

4. Also, the LORD told Moses Who to preach.

Exodus 3: 14: And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. 15: And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of

Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

He said preach the eternal, covenant LORD God who has made good on all his promises to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is the Lord's name forever, his memorial to all generations—his name and memorial is what the Lord is known for—he is known for making good on his promises.

5. Then God assured Moses that his children would obey his voice.

Exodus 3: 18: And they shall hearken to thy voice.

6. The LORD even told Moses how he would provide for them.

Exodus 3: 21: And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: 22: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Now we come to our text in chapter 4. After all the Lord's "will's" and "shall's", after saying "they will hearken to your voice."

Exodus 4: 1: And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

Brethren, do you see yourself in Moses? Aren't we slow to believe? Thankfully, our Father is slow to anger. But, I can see what filled Moses with unbelief. The Lord was sending Moses to men who were slaves under the most powerful, ruthless king on earth—like Christ sends us to preach the gospel to those who are slaves to the prince of the power of the air. Moses knew he had no power to make this people believe what he spoke—like as we have no power to make anyone believe. Only the power of God can make his people believe. By now, the people didn't know Moses and Moses did not know them—we do not know who God's elect are. The same power it takes to make a sinner live and believe, is the power it took to make Moses believe.

Proposition: So the Lord gave Moses 3 signs to show the people as he spoke. These three signs are a picture of the gospel and of the power that God works effectually in those who hear.

I. THE ROD

Exodus 4: 2: And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. 3: And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. 4: And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: 5: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee;

Christ Crucified and the Gospel we Preach

This rod pictures Christ crucified and the gospel we preach. The rod in Moses' hand was his shepherd's staff. Moses had been shepherding his father-in-law's sheep. Now the Lord was sending Moses to be his under-shepherd to shepherd his heavenly Father's sheep. The gospel of Christ crucified is as foolish to men to

conquer men's hearts and deliver them from the power of sin as was a shepherds crook to conquer the strongest king on earth and deliver God's people.

But in verse 20 this rod was now called "**the rod of God.**" The gospel may appear foolish to men but to those who are called the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation...for therein is the righteousness of God revealed." (Rom 1: 16-17) Christ is that Righteousness. (Note: "of Christ" refers to Christ, "in Christ" refers to the believers faith in Christ—Rom 3: 22; Gal 2: 16, 20.)

Christ is the Rod of God

The LORD commanded the rod be put on the ground. Likewise, at the command of God his Father, Christ Jesus came down from heavens glory to this earth.

Isaiah 11:1: And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:...4:...he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,...

Jeremiah 23:5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch [rod], and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

When cast to the earth the rod became a serpent. When Adam sinned, the serpents bite inflicted the poison of sin and we died. It was pictured in the fiery serpents which bit the children of Israel in the desert and they died. But Moses made a brass serpent. He made it like what was biting them. He lifted it up on a pole. Then all who looked to that serpent lived. (Nu 21: 4-9)

The LORD made Christ Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, the sin which caused his people to die, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Co 5: 21; Gal 3: 13; 1 Pet 2: 24) He was lifted up on the cross. By laying down his life he put away our sin. The Lord said,

John 3: 14: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Then Moses took up the rod from the earth and it became a rod again like before. It pictures Christ who having finished the work of redeeming his people, God raised Christ from the dead and he is calling out his people through his gospel.

Psalms 110:1: (A Psalm of David.) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3 Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Revelation 19: 15: And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16: And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Note: Some say that this rod could not have been turned into a real serpent then back into a rod. And some say God could not be made flesh then made sin then raised from the dead but he was. God is God. Believe.

Pharaoh's magicians imitated Moses, turning their rods into serpents. Satan has a lot of sorcerer-preachers imitating the gospel. But the rod of God ate up the rods of Pharaoh's magicians—it still does! By "the rod of God" the red sea was parted. (Ex 14:16) By the rod of God Pharaoh and his armies were drowned in the

sea. (Ex 14:26-27) By “the rod of God” Israel prevailed over Amalek (Exodus 17:9)—that rod is Jehovah Nissi—the Lord our Banner.

So like Moses depended and leaned upon that staff—the rod of God—the word of God—the power and grace of Christ our Lord—likewise we go forth into this dark world with the gospel, kept and comforted by his grace.

Psalms 23:4: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Now the next two signs, picture the power the Lord works through the gospel. One of these two things happens when the gospel is preached.

II. THE HAND

Exodus 4: 6: And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. 7: And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh;

Regeneration by God the Holy Spirit

Leprosy is a picture of sin. When Moses put his hand to his heart it became leprous. By nature our hearts are corrupt, defiled in sin.

Titus 1:15: Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

At God’s command Moses put his hand to his bosom again and it returned again like his other flesh. This pictures the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit by which we believe the gospel.

Titus 3: 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

John 15:3: Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Under the old covenant, in order to ceremonially cleanse the flesh of one who was unclean, they sprinkled the blood and ashes of a heifer on a man.

Hebrews 9: 13...if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Sinners must be born again. We must be given a new heart, a new spirit, washed and made pure by the work of the Spirit. Sinner, can you believe the Lord Jesus? Do you find yourself rejoicing that salvation is all of the Lord? It may be you have been healed of your leprosy.

III. THE WATER OF THE RIVER

Exodus 4: 8: And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. 9: And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.

The Judgment of God

The river was the source of life for Egypt. Though Pharaoh saw the rod of God eat up the magicians rods—he hardened his heart. So this was the first plague, God brought upon him. When the rod of God was stretched over their streams and ponds and rivers in Egypt, God turned them to blood. God turned even their natural life into death. This is a picture of judgment upon those who will not hearken to the gospel and believe on Christ.

God said he did that to show “his power...and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth...and to make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

Do you behold the power and mercy of God? He heard the cry of his people. Christ visited his people. God the Father sent his Son for his people. The Lord sent his gospel to his people. He turned away the stout hearted, proud king and delivered those who were weary and heavy laden! Which one are you?

Matthew 11: 28: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Hearken to the gospel and believe on Christ.

Ezekiel 33:11: Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Now, let me show you one more thing: God speaks through Christ our Mediator. God gave his word to Christ our Mediator. Christ our Mediator gives the word to his messenger and delivers him to his people and the messenger speaks the word to his people. Then by the power of Lord, typified in these first two signs, the Lord's people believe, bow and worship the Lord. That is what happened when the word was delivered to the children in Egypt.

Exodus 4: 30: And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, [the LORD spoke the word to the mediator, Moses, who gave it to the preacher Aaron, who preached it to the people] and did the signs in the sight of the people. [the picture of Christ, the power of the gospel unto salvation. Then here is the effectual result] 31: And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Have you heard that the Lord has visited his children? The work is finished. In just a little while, all who believe shall be delivered into our promised land.

Are you in bondage? Are you suffering affliction? He looks upon the affliction of his people and delivers those who cry for mery! I pray he make you bow before him and worship him.

Amen!