

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 6:1-13

To understand more about the covenant nature of God's relationship with Israel.

Read the Text:

But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." 2 God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. 7 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'" 9 Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. 10 So the LORD said to Moses, 11 "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land." 12 But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?" 13 But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (Ex. 6:1-13, ESV)

Study the Text:

Reminders

Chapter 6 begins where chapter 5 left off. Moses had just voiced frustration to God that the Hebrew people were in a significantly worse state because of Moses' and Aaron's confrontation with Pharaoh. God's dialogue with Moses in this portion of chapter 6 is a series of reminders and new information. Below is a brief outline of some of the reminders God brought before Moses.

A STRONG HAND

God's redemption of the Israelites and their subsequent Exodus would not come through reasoning with words but with powerful signs and plagues upon the whole of Egypt. God reminds Moses in verse 1: "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." God is not required to justify anything He does, and yet this process of "bargaining" paves the way for God's hand of justice to harshly fall upon him. God reminds Moses that it will be "under compulsion" that Pharaoh lets the Israelites go (Ex. 6:1, NASB). That's the idea behind the "strong hand" of God (or "mighty hand" in NIV).

THE PATRIARCHS

Bear in mind that centuries have passed since the patriarchs were alive. While Moses, an Israelite, was no doubt aware of the patriarchs, the imminence of their lives had long since been removed from the Hebrew people. God reminds Moses that He is the same God that "appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." In other words, there is continuity between the covenantal promises He made with them then and the work He is doing now in Egypt among them. God is appealing, therefore, to His character as it has been revealed in

history. Moses is not to just “take His word for it,” but rather reckon with the fact that God’s word to him is built upon a history of action in which God has never failed. He is the covenant promise keeper that never breaks His promises. While Moses and Aaron (and the Hebrews) were no doubt disheartened by Pharaoh’s increased cruelty, God is subtly reminding them to not allow Pharaoh’s obstinance to diminish their faith. God will do what He says He will do, always.

THE LORD, EL SHADDAI

One other interesting detail is the connection that God makes for Moses concerning His identity. He has made Himself known to Moses by His covenant name, “*the LORD*,” or, “*Yahweh*,” (Ex. 3:14). While God has been described by this name throughout Genesis (it was written by Moses, after all), God never specifically revealed Himself with this covenant name to His people until the burning bush account with Moses. When appearing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He revealed Himself to them as “El Shaddai,” or “God Almighty,” a name that means, “God, the Mountain One” (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; cf. also the early use of the name in Job 8:5; 13:3; 15:25, and the later use in Ezek 10:5). However, here in chapter 6, God not only says “I am the LORD,” (Ex. 6:2), but also “God Almighty” (Ex. 6:3). God was revealing to Moses that He is the same God that appeared to the patriarchs, and that the events that were happening in Egypt were connected to the rest of Hebrew history, beginning with Abraham.

Covenant People

In verse 4, God recalls the covenant He established with His people in which He also promised the land of Canaan to them, and then again, verse 5 connects the Israelites in Egypt to this covenant. This was all, of course, predicted to Abram when God first promised to bless him: “Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions” (Gen. 15:13-13). God foreknew the Egyptian occupation, the plagues, the Exodus story, and the many possessions that would be brought out of Egypt as plunder and even revealed it to Abraham. God sees all things because apart from Him, nothing comes to pass. Now, centuries later, He is making this known to Moses as well. They are all a part of the covenant, and this is reinforced by the common covenantal language of verse 7: “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.”

Notice as well, that God begins His response in verse 2 and ends His response in verse 8 with the phrase “I am the LORD.” This is what scholars refer to as an *inclusio*. What is an *inclusio*? While it sounds like a spell from a Harry Potter movie, it’s actually a literary device also known as bracketing or an envelope structure, and consists of repetition at the beginning and ending of a text to emphasize something important concerning the whole message. In this instance, verses 2 through 8 are bracketed off by the phrase, “I am the LORD,” signifying that the events described in these verses, while seemingly impossible, are possible because it is the LORD who is doing it, and with God nothing is impossible (Lk. 1:37). Egypt will be judged with “great acts of judgment,” (Ex. 6:6) but not just any acts of judgement; the acts of judgment that come from the Judge over all things. Israel will be redeemed “with an outstretched arm,” (Ex. 6:6) but not just any arm; the arm of the LORD. The people of Israel will be brought into a personal relationship with God, and not just any god; the LORD, El Shaddai, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will not only tell them He is their God, they will “know” that He is their God (Ex. 6:7). Even still, after all that God confirmed to Moses, when Moses spoke to the people of Israel “they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery” (Ex. 6:9). It

would take more for Pharaoh to budge, and now it becomes apparent that it will take more for the Israelites to budge as well.

Demands, Not Bargains

What began in Exodus 5:1 as a kind of bargaining (“Please let us go a three days’ journey”) has turned into a concrete demand in Exodus 6:10: “Let the people of Israel go.” God is no longer asking, He is demanding. There are no more pleas, but there will be a dreadful display of power eventually. Moses, still scared and broken in spirit because of all that had transpired, relented: “But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?” (Ex. 6:12). Still, God charged both him and Aaron to go back to Pharaoh and make His demands known. From this point, things will only get worse for Pharaoh because of his hardness of heart.

What About Now?

One takeaway is the graciousness of God. God’s first approach to Pharaoh, though He knows Pharaoh has a hard heart, is to ask politely to allow the people of Israel to go into the wilderness for three days. He doesn’t need to do this. He isn’t obligated to ask nice, nor is He obligated to ask at all. God can do what He desires without need for justification. However, God is gracious and kind (Rom. 2:4, 11:22; Titus 3:4-5). In continuation of this point, another takeaway is the reality that sometimes people need more than kindness or even words to bring them to submission to God’s will. God tells Moses in verse 1 that the only reason Pharaoh will send the Israelites out of Egypt will be because he is under the compulsion of God’s strong hand. God will move Pharaoh with “an outstretched arm” and through “great acts of judgment” (Ex. 6:6). Finally, a third takeaway is the importance of trusting God over people’s opinions. Moses and Aaron both were deflated no doubt in part because of the lack of faith in the people. Yet, God tells them to press onward (Ex. 6:13). Sometimes leadership requires making choices that are unpopular, trusting that God will eventually sway the hearts of His people to support it.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 6:1. What did the LORD say to Moses? To what does the “strong hand” refer?

2. Read Exodus 6:2-3. How does God begin His response to Moses in verse 2? How does God reveal Himself to Moses, and how is this different from the way He revealed Himself to the patriarchs?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 6:4-5. What did God establish with the patriarchs? What did He promise them? What prompted Him to begin acting now? What is His actions based on?

2. Read Exodus 6:6. What is Moses to say to the people of Israel? What does the “outstretched arm” and “great acts of judgment” mean?
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Day Three

1. Read Exodus 6:7-8. Why is verse 7 important? (Hint: See above notes) What does God promise to do in these verses?
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2. Read Exodus 6:9. How did the people respond to Moses when he spoke to them again?
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Day Four

1. Read Exodus 6:10-11. What does God order Moses to say to Pharaoh? How is this different than the first confrontation?
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2. Read Exodus 6:12-13. Why is Moses reluctant to speak to Pharaoh? Over who does God give Moses and Aaron charge?
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Discuss the Text!

Week 11 Discussion: Hard Lessons

One of the takeaways mentioned above is the (harsh) reality that sometimes we require more than words to bring us into submission to God. For Pharaoh, it will mean a series of plagues that will forever change Egypt as a whole. For us, it's sometimes the disciplining hand of God. Talk as a group about the hard lessons you've learned through the years of following Jesus, and how though you were warned, it took more than that to bring correction into your life.

1. Icebreaker: What's the hardest lesson you've had to learn?
2. Has anyone ever talk to you about your sin, and you weren't willing to listen? How did that end up working out for you?
3. Have you ever talked to someone about their sin and they weren't willing to listen? How did that end up working out for them?
4. Why are consequences so effective in forcing change? Or are they effective in forcing change?
5. Have any of the hard lessons you've learned become instruments in your ministry to other people?
6. What is something you know you need to change, but haven't yet. What is preventing you?

Takeaways:

1. God tells Moses that He will force Pharaoh to let His people go.
2. God tells Moses that He is the same God of the patriarchs.
3. God reaffirms His covenant with the Israelites and promises to bring them back to the promised land.
4. God sends Moses, despite the people's lack of faith, back to Pharaoh to make a second demand.