

## Exodus Bible Study

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### Introduction to Exodus

“Any traversal of the Book of Exodus is a trip across holy ground....simply taking the book in hand is a close thing to a religious act.”

John Durham, 1984

I hope our Wed. night Bible studies will be religious acts, for we will indeed be traveling across holy ground.

\* We will be in the mudpits of Egypt hearing their cries from liberation that are ultimately heard by the God of creation

\* We will be standing on the ground beside Moses in front of the burning bush; we'll need to take off our shoes with him.

\* We'll be struggling with Moses as he's given the momentous task of delivering a group of slaves from the bondage of the strongest empire in the world.

\* We'll be with Moses as he stands before the Pharaoh echoing God's words, "Let my people go."

\* We will be in the home of the Jews that very first Passover night, that eerie night, when shouts and screams were heard across the land of Egypt as first born after first born were killed by the angel of death. The mysterious, powerful acts of God had begun.

\* We'll be excitedly walking out with our families, exiting Egypt, and heading for a new land that we don't know about. All we know is that 400 years of bondage is over and the God of our fathers is leading us out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

\* We'll be wandering around with a confused, insecure people in the deserts of the Middle East. At one moment they are reverent and trusting and the next they are grumbling and backsliding.

\* We'll be there at Sinai when the presence of God is revealed in a powerful, frightening way out of the thunderous volcanoes of that holy mountain.

\* We'll tremble with our Jewish forefathers as Moses comes down off that holy hill with tablets of stone that have been imprinted by the very finger of God himself.

\* We'll grieve with Moses as he sees the people of God forget so quickly and make idols out of gold soon after they have received the 10 Commandments of God.

\* We'll be caught up in the forces of Satan and God as we're pulled first in the direction of good and righteousness and then toward evil and idolatry.

\* We will experience the wonderful grace of the Almighty God of Sinai as he picks up the pieces of the tablets of broken stone and once again gives his people a new covenant.

\* And finally, as if it was a scene from the last chapter of Revelation, we'll experience the glory of God as he fills the tabernacle, that mobile worship center, with his glorious presence.

### **First Book of the Bible**

All the Bible is sacred, but there's something special about this book for it's the first book of the Bible in many senses.

How is it the first book of the Bible?

- 1. Israel is born.** The nation of Israel is born, given an identifiable religion, political laws, land, and worship center. God no longer will simply work through individuals (Abr, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) but will speak to a nation of people.
  - Prior to Exodus there was a man named "Israel", meaning "*he who struggles with God.*" But only now does a people, a nation have an identity as a people who struggle with God.
  - Israel will celebrate their first covenant with God, and then complain of God's demands on them.

NT Equivalent = church, ekklesia

- 2. Torah/Law is born.** The 10 commandments are given to a nation. Also, the Sinai Covenant is given (Ex. 34:12-26).
  - This is the beginning of the Bible, a written code, a compilation of written stories and laws that will drive a religious people.

NT Equivalent = New Testament

- 3. Icons/Symbols are born.** (Tabernacle, Ark, Lampstand)

These things aren't idols. They don't symbolize God, they're not attempts to picture or paint God. They symbolize ideas.

\*Thus the tabernacle is the place of God's dwelling.

\*The Ark is also a place where the commandments were kept and thus symbolized God's dwelling thru instruction.

\* The lampstand symbolized God's light that he shed on the nation of Israel.

\* Passover set in motion a meal that would commemorate deliverance of God's people.  
Akin to the NT observance of the Lord's Supper, the new Passover.

NT equivalent = cross and Lord's Supper

4. **Priesthood is born.** The Levites weren't given land when the distribution took place. Instead they were given the responsibility that the nation worship God and sacrifice to God. But also the entire nation was designated as a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6). All of Israel was to act for and be a representative of God.

### God gives us some special things in Exodus:

1. **Special Name.** "*Yahweh.*" Never before named.

- God was always "the God of Abraham ..." "the God of your fathers..."
- This name describes God
- It derives from God's self-disclosing statement to Moses when Moses asked, "When they asked me who sent you, what shall I say?"
- God says, "I am the God of your fathers. 'I am who I am'"
- Yahweh is play on that phrase. It's a derivative of the verb "to be"
- This isn't something that Moses discovered. It was revealed to him by Yahweh.

2. **Deliverance.** Out of Egypt and across the Red Sea. This is the OT equivalent to the Resurrection in the NT. It is the single most important event of the Bible in the OT. The entire OT is focused around the Exodus.

- This is where the book gets its English name "Exodus"
- "Exodus" is Latin for the Greek Exodos, meaning exit. This name was given to the book by those who translated it into Greek. In Hebrew the book is named after its first two words (*we'eloh shemoth* ["these are the names of"])
- this deliverance is an act of liberation. The first 15 chapters deal with this liberating act of God
- it is a spiritual and social/political act of liberation
- This newly named God is a revolutionary God, who overthrows oppressors and gives

hope and guidance to the captives.

### **3. Presence:**

- Exodus is not only concerned with liberating a people
- it's concerned with providing a structure and means for them to have an ongoing life
- what good is it to liberate slaves if all their going to do is run around the desert in chaos. They need land, law, and liturgies.
- it institutionalizes their future with laws, liturgies, guidelines, and a dynamic presence. God is going to be with these people, dwell with them.
- this is not an all rosy picture
- to have the presence of God in your midst is both wonderful and terrible
- God is holy and his holiness is so powerful it can be terrifying  
(Think Raiders of the Lost Ark. The Ark of the Covenant is a powerful force. But it's a deadly force if used in the wrong way or casually presumed upon)
- Yahweh was with the Israelites in a cloud by day and a fire by night. They wander around for 40 years, but it's a God-guided wandering.
- they construct a tabernacle to "house" God.

### **4. Law**

- the law is what God gives these ex-slaves to govern their lives
- the law institutionizes Israel
- they are not a one-generation nation.
- they are a people who will govern themselves by this Law
- so not long after they are liberated God brings the Israelites to Sinai
- the law is given through a frightening theophany
- the mountain shakes and rumbles. Moses is changed on the mountain
- smoke comes up
- he's there for a long time. They fear for his life and eventually believe he has been consumed by this God

- this theophany is to assure Israel this law is from God. It is holy and authoritative

- Moses didn't write this law. It's not from the finger of Moses. It's from the finger of God. This is an act of graciousness from God, but also an act of demand.

- Only the 10 Commandments come directly from the finger of God

- The rest come from Moses, as Mediator

- This is not to say the other laws in Exodus are not from God or not authoritative. It's just that the 10 Commandments are unique, in that only they come from the finger of God himself

- the Law guarantees that God's will will continue to be available to the people

## **5. Covenant.**

- liberation, law

- all for the purpose of covenant

- they don't just have laws to guide them. They have a covenant

- they are given the chance to enter into a sacred promise with God

- Yahweh and Israel are to be intimately, profoundly, and permanently committed to one another

- God had made a covenant with Abraham. God would give them land, make them a nation, and give them many descendants. They, in turn, would obey God.

- Now the terms are explicit. The laws have been given explicitly.

- in this act, a social novelty has been introduced to the world

- a community founded on nothing other than an act of faith and loyalty has been formed

- historically, we see the covenant was broken (Ex 19-24), yet it was renewed in Exodus 32-34

- so we see this covenant is fractured and impinged upon again and again

- in fact, much of the OT, is narrative about the ebb and flow of this covenant

- we see the fidelity of God and the infidelity of his people
- and therefore God “plucks up and tears down” , but also “plants and builds” (Jer 1:10; 31:27-28)
- thus the theme of covenant permits the terrible tension of judgment and hope.
- the prophets of the OT will oscillate between prophetic sermons about the judgment of God b/c of the infidelity of Israel, and the forgiveness of God to a people who have no other hope.
- in this regard. The story of Exodus is the story of our lives, our church, our denomination, our believing communities.

## 6. Worship.

- Built the Tabernacle, put in it the Ark of the Covenant, Lampstand, mercy seat, designated times and festivals for worship.
  - Worship will no longer be haphazard. They will have order and structure to their worship. But their worship will also be mobile.
  - in Genesis we had stones to remind us to worship God. When the people passed by the stones, they would be told a story of God’s activity in their lives. But you had to be near the stones to prompt this worship
    - now they will carry the Tabernacle wherever they go.
    - they will regularly worship and remember the God of their history.
    - we have the first hymn of the Bible (Ex 15)
- “Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord” (Ex 15:1)

### Outline: For Basketball fans

1 <sup>st</sup> Half – – Rescue	Chapter 1-18
2 <sup>nd</sup> Half – – Response	Chapters 19-40

### Outline: For Hockey fans

1 <sup>st</sup> Period	Israel in Egypt	1-13:16
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2<sup>nd</sup> Period      Israel in the Wilderness      13:17-18

3<sup>rd</sup> Period      Israel at Sinai      19-40

### **3 Key Participants in Exodus:**

**1. Yahweh**, present throughout

- present in the beginning when Moses is in a basket in the Nile
- present at the end when his glory fills the tabernacle
- present in the thunder on Sinia
- present in the clouds during the day and fire by night in the desert
- The God who has a name
- The God who acts, delivers, liberates
- The God who is more powerful than world powers
- The God of wrath and mercy

**2. Moses**,

- mediator b/w God and Israel
- agent of deliverance, reluctant deliverer of an oppressed people
- interpreter of God's redemption.,

**3. Israel**

- the people for whom God has given his presence, selected as a chosen people.
- the people who, like Jacob, struggle with God
- the people who enter into a binding, covenant relationship with Yahweh
- the people who are called to be priests to the world, to the nations

### **Impact of Exodus**

- No other book is cited more often in the OT
- In the NT, only Psalms and Isaiah are cited more, and for the obvious reasons of liturgy (Psalms) and messianism (Isaiah).

- Gives us the fundamental proclamation of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments.
  - \* God liberates.                      God saves/rescues
  - \* God gives law                      God gives ethical guidelines. Lists. Great Commandment
  - \* God makes covenant              God creates new covenant w/ his church
  - \* God is present                      God is present through the Holy Spirit

If the cross of Jesus Christ, his atoning death, is the lens through which we read the NT, the deliverance of Israel, is the lens through which we read the OT.

Henceforth, Israel would be identified as the people chosen/rescued by God.

- This would become prominent when Israel was in exile and once again sought deliverance from the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They would seek a deliverer.
- Then in the NT, we recognize that the oppressed Israelites, are seeking a deliverer, an anointed one, who would bring them out of Roman bondage.

## **Conclusion**

Moses came into Yahweh's presence at the burning bush (Ex 3). After that Moses is seen struggling to convince a frightened and insecure people in a strange place, of Yahweh's presence, a reality he knows but hasn't seen.

In Ex. 33 Moses asked to see Yahweh's glory, but was denied. But a great satisfaction must've taken place when Yahweh's Presence filled the Tabernacle and Moses could no longer enter the Tent of Appointed Meeting (Ex 40:34-35). He still couldn't see Yahweh, but he knew for certain that Yahweh was there. Anyone who studies the Book of Exodus seriously with faith, will know how Moses felt.

I pray we will see and feel Yahweh's presence just as strongly as Moses did in that last chapter of Exodus. A feeling of his presence so strongly that we can hardly see that there's any room for ourselves.

## **Extra Stuff**

### **Central Idea**

Exodus is a book of faith (written by a people of faith), about faith (about the faith of the Israelites) and directed to those of faith (directed to those descendants who would be heirs of their faith).

Its central idea is **Presence, Holy Presence**. It's the Presence of Yahweh

- with Israelite babies during delivery (1:17)
- with Moses in the Nile River (ch 2)
- with Moses at the burning bush (3:6)
- with Moses before Pharaoh (3:11-12)
- with the people as they leave Egypt (14:21-22)
- with the people as they wander in the desert (16:8)
- with Moses on Sinai (19:18)
- with Israel at Sinai (19:17)
- and finally with the people in the Tabernacle built particularly for God's presence (40:35)

No matter what the circumstances, the central idea is that Yahweh is present with the nation of Israel.

## **The Oppression of Israel**

**Exodus 1:1-14**

**Title:** not “Exodus.” Literally it’s “*These are the names of.*” It wasn’t until 200 BC with the writing of the Septuagiant (first Greek translation of OT) that the word “Exodus” was used. The word “Exodus” means “a going out.” Thus indicating the prime importance of the people of Israel going out of Egypt.

The significance of the Hebrew title is the connecting link it gives us to Genesis.

- The first word of the book of Exodus is “*and.*”
- Ex 1:1 = Gen 46:8 word for word copy

It connects us to the promises of God to Abraham (Gen 12:2 and 15:5) to the slaves in Egypt. A promise of many descendants. The sons of Israel are the fulfilment of that promise.

- We are confronted with an immediate dilemma. The people of promise are in bondage.
- You may recall when we were studying Genesis the promises of God were constantly under threat because of the barrenness of the mothers. How was Abraham going to be the father of a great nation if he was an old man, his wife was an old woman, and they had no children?
- Now the threat is not barrenness. There are plenty of babies. The threat is bondage. How are you going to be a great nation if you are a nation of slave?
- v 1-4, we are given the names of the 12 sons of Israel
- v. 5 a repeat of Gen 46:26-27

**Show Map**

### **Historical Event # 1: The Growth of the Israelites (v. v. 6-7)**

Also see, Gen 50:22-26 for the death of Joseph

- Joseph is named last
- he is mentioned separately from his 11 brothers. His name carries power and prestige. His name means “*He adds.*” It is through Joseph that power and privilege are added to the sons of Israel
- even powerful people die. Joseph dies at the age of 110. With his death we can only imagine what is in store for the sons of Israel in Egypt

v.7 this verse covers 430 years of Israelite history, emphasis is on their great growth of descendants, from a mere 70 to 600,000 men (cf. Ex 12:37), this must mean about 2.5 million including women and children.

“multiplied” was the word used usually for swarming offspring of animals, especially frogs.

“exceedingly numerous” = a teeming of swarm.

– A swarm of mosquitos and gnats. Have you ever seen that? It’s almost scary.

– “land was filled” they are everywhere

Acts 7:17-19 includes information from Stephen’s sermon about the population and oppression of Israel.

- this population about to be liberated has a promise and a pedigree that Pharaoh can’t see, nor in the end contain.

- the Exodus narrative begins in remembering. Though they are slaves, they are indoctrinated in a memory of promise. 430 years of slavery is not able to destroy that memory and identity of Israel. Contemplating this fact shows the tremendous power of promise and memory. The combination of those two forces can sustain life even in the face of slavery and oppression.

## **Historical Event # 2: The Pharaoh of Exodus (v.v. 8-10)**

*“Then a new king who did not know about Joseph came to power in Egypt.”*

– We move from celebrating the growth of the sons of Israel to a regime change

– This is not just a change from Bush to Obama, this is a total revolutionary change,

– A new dynasty has become. One with a very short memory.

– *“He didn’t know Joseph”* of course, Joseph was dead. This means that he didn’t know the tradition of respect granted the Hebrews on account of Joseph.

Opposite of Gen 47:5-6.

– *“Know”* here is experiential knowledge, intimate/sexual knowledge, knowledge b/w God and man.

– The former policies of peace and respect for Joseph and descendants has ended.

– Allusion is to **Seti I (1309-1290 BC)**, leader and first Pharaoh of 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. He probably moved the capital from Thebes on the Nile up to the Egyptian Delta region

200 miles to the north. Probably this was where the vast majority of the Hebrews lived and so he was made aware of their vast population.

- He is the first person to speak in the book of Exodus
- The beginning of the propaganda campaign, Seti puts fear in the Egyptian people highlighting the threat of Israel.

He notes the population increase, but doesn't see it as a sign of promise and blessing, but as threat and curse.

He does what all good politicians do. He advances his policies by telling part truth and part falsehood:

- 1) They might fight against us (probably false)
- 2) They might leave, interpretation – our economic system might collapse (probably true).

This is most likely the real fear. The new king anticipates the exodus, the departure of cheap labor to build his monuments to Egyptian power, to his power.

The king utters the word that drives the narrative: "leave" or exit ( *ala* in Hebrew)

### **Historical Event # 3: The Oppression of Israel (v.v.11-14)**

- V. 11 "forced labor". A nice word for slavery
- Notices the descriptive words and phrases:

forced labor

Oppressed

Worked them ruthlessly

Lives bitter

Hard labor

v. 14 hard labor/ruthlessly

- The labor is used to build "*store cities*." Ways to monopolize the food market.

For the government to grow in power it must monopolize key markets. It always does this under the cloak of "what's good for the people." But the people are not

usually the beneficiaries of these policies. The policies tend to enhance the power of the powerful, and diminish the power of the weak.

The Egyptian govt was determined to monopolize the food market.

- The food was stored. Surpluses were kept for themselves. It was a way for the powerful to maintain their power, and the poor, the slaves to use their lives to enhance the power of the powerful. (cf Gen 12:10)

The slaves couldn't build a life for themselves. They had to enhance the power of the Egyptians. When this goes on long enough it becomes a recipe for revolution!!

V 12 the more they worked them, the more babies they had,

- They were resilient. Even in their weakness God made them strong.
- The hidden promises of God are not thwarted by the new policies of Pharaoh.

V 12b the propaganda campaign began to work, the people were "afraid/dreaded" the Hebrews. When people have only one source of information, they can be manipulated and controlled. (That's why I believe freedom of the press is probably the greatest and most important freedom there is).

Here we have the beginning of the persecution of the Jews. History would hold many more persecutions for them. From book of Esther to Holocaust!

One person reading the book of Exodus said, "I'm going to ask God why he let this happen." A Jewish man heard the comment and said, "Madam, it's a very long line."

Their tenacity is amazing. For 430 they had been slaves and they still passed on their faith (the promises of God to Abraham). For 10 generations they were born as slaves and they died as slaves. Yet they continued to hold on to and pass along their faith. Amazing.

#### **Historical Lesson #4 : Subversion of the Women**

- the king (still not called Pharaoh) sees his forced labor policy is not helping
- it is building his storehouses, but it's not subduing the threat
- he adopts a new policy. He moves from **forced labor** to **genocide**
- very much what Hitler did to the Jews in the 1930s

- he tells them to kill the Hebrew babies if they are boys. If they are girls, let them live
- this is the first time we see the word "*Hebrew*" in the Bible
- it comes from a Hebrew word "*hapiru*" which has a vague etymology
- the most substantial scholarship resides behind the idea that the *hapiru* were social outcasts. It wasn't necessarily used for the "sons of Israel." *Hapiru* were in Egypt and throughout the ANE who had no social standing and owned no land. They endlessly disrupted the social order. We think of the Gypsies in Europe. We think of the "underclass" or the "homeless of America."

- these women fear God more than Pharaoh
- they make up a story that says the Hebrew women are so strong they have their babies before the midwives show up.

- since this plan failed, the king's next plan was to kill all baby boys. They are to be thrown into the Nile.

- it's an irrational policy driven by fear. These are the ones who could be most productive in building the govt buildings. But the king is no longer thinking rationally.

## **Lessons:**

### **I. God's promises are going to be fulfilled.**

- The first promise was already being fulfilled (progeny/descendants)

Gen 15:5

Gen 28:13-15

- The promises of a great nation and land was still unfulfilled

Gen 17:8

Gen 35:11-13

- Exodus is a testimony to the promises of God. Notice the names of the Sons of Israel.
- Especially Simeon, "he surely heard."

- God keeps all his promises (Psalm 145:13),

Someone said, "You can't break God's promises by leaning on them."

But it may not happen in your lifetime. -Heb 11: (especially v.13)

Though generations of bondage were a reality for the Hebrews, the promises of God were finally fulfilled. God will not abandon us.

**Craddock Story:** Fred Craddock told a story of going back one summer to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, to take a short vacation with his wife. One night they found a quiet little restaurant where they looked forward to a private meal—just the two of them. While they were waiting for their meal they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting guests. Craddock whispered to his wife, “I hope he doesn’t come over here.” He didn’t want the man to intrude on their privacy.

But the man did come by his table. “Where you folks from?” he asked amicably. “Oklahoma.” “Splendid state, I hear, although I’ve never been there. What do you do for a living?” “I teach homiletics at the graduate seminary of Phillips University.” “Oh, so you teach preachers, do you. Well I’ve got a story I want to tell you.” And with that he pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with Craddock and his wife.

Dr. Craddock said he groaned inwardly: Oh no, here comes another preacher story. It seems everyone has one. The man stuck out his hand. “I’m Ben Hooper. I was born not far from here across the mountains. My mother wasn’t married when I was born so I had a hard time. When I started to school my classmates had a name for me, and it wasn’t a very nice name. I used to go off by myself at recess and during lunch-time because the taunts of my playmates cut so deeply.

What was worse was going downtown on Saturday afternoon and feeling every eye burning a hole through you. They were all wondering just who my real father was. When I was about 12 years old a new preacher came to our church. I would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel every eye in church on me. Just about the time I got to the door I felt a big hand on my shoulder. I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me.

“Who are you, son? Whose boy are you?” I felt the old weight come on me. It was like a big black cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down. But as he looked down at me, studying my face, he began to smile a big smile of recognition. “Wait a minute,” he said, “I know who you are. I see the family resemblance. You are a son of God.”

With that he slapped me across the rump and said, "Boy, God's made you a great promise. Go and claim it." The old man looked across the table at Fred Craddock and said, "That was the most important single sentence ever said to me." With that he smiled, shook the hands of Craddock and his wife, moved on to another table to greet old friends. Suddenly, Fred Craddock remembered. On two occasions the people of Tennessee had elected an illegitimate to be their governor. One of them was Ben Hooper.

#### **Hold on to God's Promises:**

Oppression	–	Freedom
Death	–	Resurrection
Lonely	–	Presence
Defeated	–	A new start

#### **II. The Tenacious Faith of the Jews**

- The sons of Israel had faith in God, in the promises of God  
Also amazed with the tenacious faith of the Jews. They continued to pass down their faith generation after generation even without a Bible or the 10 Commandments. All they had was a story of the promise of their forefathers.
- Heb 11:1 faith in the unseen
- Judson Taylor, p. 24, March 2002

### **The Birth of a Deliverer**

#### **Exodus 2:1-22**

Update: Pharaoh had been trying to reduce the population of Hebrews:

- He had been afraid of violence, or worse, loss of cheap labor
  - Plan A: make slaves work harder (1:11)
    - Ruthless, oppressive
  - Plan B: have mid-wives kill Hebrews (2:15ff)
    - Evidently a local plan, not wide spread
  - Plan C: kill all Hebrew male babies (Ex 1:22)
    - Drastic measures

### Total statewide infanticide

- Enlist all the citizens of Egypt
- The Nile (source of life) becomes the means for death
- Of course this is an irrational policy. These boys are the very means Pharaoh has to cheap labor. Nevertheless fear that escalates out of control becomes irrational, even insanity!
- Eerily similar to the insane fear that lead Hitler to the pogroms prior and during WWII.

READ 2:1-15

**VERSE 1:** Moses is a Levi

- after all this insane, irrational policies to lead to death, this stories begins like an innocent little fairy tale: *“Now a man of the house of Levi married a levite woman.”*

- and they have a baby.

- Life goes on. Pharaoh can't stop life. He tries, but he's powerless to stop this.

- Father is Amram, Mother is Jochebed (Ex 6:20)
- Older brother is Aaron by 3 years (Ex 4:14, 7:7)
- Older sister is Miriam (Num. 26:59), called a “Prophetess” (Ex 15:20)
- None of these family members are named here. The important thing is not identifying them, but sheer reminder that despite the insane policies of death called for by Pharaoh, life goes on. Birth and marriage continue. Pharaoh calls for death of all sons continue to be born and live, and become deliverers for God and God's people.

**V 2-3:** A baby is born. We don't know what his name is. We're never told the name he is given by his parents. All we know is he is “goodly”, “fine”

- “goodly” (KJV) means healthy
- “fine” (NIV), Hebrew word is **t o b**, the same word used to describe creation when it was finished. God saw that it was good/ **t o b**. Once again God is creating life from

- the midst of chaos. God is about to create something good, something out of nothing, life out of death.
- Put in a “basket.” Hebrew word is **t e b a**, same word that Noah built. This new ark floats on the water of the Nile which was intended for death, and protects life in order to start a new world. The new world Moses will start is the new world promised by God, a new world of freedom.
  - Place in the “reeds.” Hebrew word is **s u p**, the same word used in 13:18 to describe what the Israelites passed through to escape the Egyptians. The **Sea of S U P**. We have some foreshadowing here. Moses is protected by these reeds. One day his people will be saved by the reeds. Really, God is doing the saving.
  - This unnamed mother exercises active faith. No doubt she prayed for the safety of her child, but she also used guile, creativity, and plain work to maximize his chances for life. Ironically, she puts him in the waters that were intended to be his graveyard. She gave up her son in faith that God would take care of her child.

### **How can we have such an active faith?**

#### **1. We pray and act simultaneously.**

- we don't pray and do nothing. We don't act w/o praying. We pray and act simultaneously.

Faith is active (doing) and trusting (believing) Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)

Traveling down Mississippi when boat caught fire “I pray more enthusiastically if I carry the water and pray at the same time.”

- my car wreck in 1999.
- I believe in God and seatbelts.
- Jochebed believed in God and acted w/ wisdom. She took a risk, but it was a risk teeming in guile, creativity, and organization. Active faith leads to life.

#### **2. Active faith lets go of what we have, knowing it was God's all along**

- it's letting go, giving up control at the right time, in the right place, in the right way

- Moses' mother let her son go. He was surely going to die if she kept him. She had no choice, but she did. We often hold on to things that are no longer ours to keep. We hold on to our money, our children, our health.

- In matters of financial stewardship, you'll hear me talk about the value to you, for giving the first 10% of our income. We have the notion that we must hold on to that, use it in our way in order to have what we want. We convince ourselves we can create a better system than God. God's system if giving to his church 10 percent. Then he will help you use the 90 percent in a more productive way. Active faith leads us to give that up to God, and trust that God can do more with our 90% than we could ever do on our own with our 100%. Did you hear that? God can do more with your 90% than you could ever do on your own with your 100%.

- What do you think god wants you to let go of, in order to become what you're supposed to be?

- **Controlling our children?** "God use my child for your purposes!" We are only stewards of our children. At the right time, we relinquish control over their decisions, values, faith, etc.

- **Determining our vocational future** "God use my life..." Have we come to the point where we relinquish control of our lives and say, "God use me for your purposes." I give up trying to do it my way, doing it on my own.

- **Time**, God take my time and use it for your purposes. What if we were to stop rushing all the time, and take a few minutes a day to think, reflect, pray, be still. We make the excuse we don't have time, but if we were to stop, slow down, take some time to pray, read, reflect, soul search, we would ultimately get more done. Be more soulfully productive.

- I remember the testimony of Carolyn Strawbridge, a mother of a missionary, who came out of my church in Durham. She honestly confessed her concern about her daughter's (Tracy) sense of call to Poland to serve deaf children. Carolyn also happened to have a son in the Air Force who flew planes during the Iraqi war. She worried about her safety and future. She could've put pressure on Tracy to find a more regular job, a more normal vocation, a more stable life. But she didn't. She and her husband Larry supported Tracy and let her know, they wanted God's will and they were willing to trust her into God's hands.

- Active faith releases God's gifts into the Nile and trusts God to care for these gifts.

## V 4-7 Women of Faith

- The sister is the 4<sup>th</sup> woman so far named in the Exodus narrative being used by God. (2 conniving midwives, Moses' creative mother, and now his clever sister).
- while we continue to debate about the proper role of women in the church, God is busy using women in creative ways to accomplish his purposes.
- Miriam is now exercising active faith
- No doubt she would have to feed little Moses every now and then
- Get him if alligators got close.
- Did she know Pharaoh's daughter bathed here regularly? What did she hope to see?
- This certainly was greater than she had hoped for. The pharaoh's daughter himself drew Moses out of the water. Or was it worse than they hoped for. This is the daughter of the king who has decreed that all these Hebrew baby boys should be killed. What kind of woman is this daughter? Friend or foe?

### V 7 notice quick wit of Miriam

- as soon as Pharaoh's daughter says, "*This is a Hebrew baby,*" Moses' sisters breaks into the conversation.

*"Do you need a Hebrew nurse?"* Very clever

Mt. 10:16 *"be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves."*

God wants us to think, to be quick witted, wise, clever, searching

- Jesus died to take away our sins, not our brains
- Miriam took a chance to intervene on behalf of her brother and family. She didn't know how the Pharaoh's daughter would respond
- The daughter had to know the decrees of her father. She revealed she knew he was a Hebrew? How did she know that? Of course, we're not told any of that. **The point** of it all is to see the dramatic, God-ordained irony of it all.
  - Pharaoh is seeking death, his daughter is protecting life
  - The mother is putting her baby in the river of dead babies, and thereby saves his life

- The Pharaoh of death is about to become the grandfather of one who will deliver life.
- When we place our faith in God, greater things will happen than we had ever hoped. God intervenes and makes us more than conquerors. We don't know what the future holds, but God takes seeds of faith and makes them grow into tall trees, greater strength and stature than we ever anticipated. This is not the prosperity Gospel, promising you 1000 dollars if you invest 100 dollars. It's the Gospel of Jesus, that promises you the abundant life, when you begin with young child-like faith.

### **V 8-10 Divine irony**

**1)** The mother is being paid to nurse her own son. She not only saves his life, she's getting paid to save his life!!

- This is the beginning of a great comedy !!

**2)** Not only that, but he's going to get a fine Egyptian education (Acts 7:20 ff). The slave boy who is supposed to be killed by the Pharaoh is going to college on a scholarship from the Pharaoh's Foundation !!!

### **Moses**

We don't know how much time has elapsed b/w vv9 and 10. At some point the mother returns the child to Pharaoh's daughter. Only now is he given the name "Moses."

Name: Moses is an Egyptian name, (Ptahmose, Tuthmosis, Ahmose) but it is also a homonym to the Hebrew word meaning "*to draw out*"

- Only time such a Hebrew word is used in the Bible is 2 Sam. 22:17 "*He drew me out of mighty waters.*"
- It's the perfect name. Moses is an Egyptian name, but also has a Hebrew meaning about rescue from water. Moses was rescued from the water, and later he would lead his people to a rescue through the water. Again, the God-ordained irony is that Pharaoh's daughter gives him an Egyptian name that foreshadows his activity as deliverer from Egyptian bondage.
- But in the end, blood was thicker than water. Moses was now going to be privileged with Egyptian education, wealth, and status. His temptation would be to remain in

the land of privilege and security and comfort. But we will soon see, his Hebrew instincts speak louder than his Egyptian privilege.

The woman who suckled him became the mother whom he loved more dearly.

Moses had stronger bonds to the Hebrews than to the Egyptians (Heb 11:24-25)

## V 11 Moses with his people as an adult

- We are skipping 10, 20, 30 years of life
  - He goes “into” his people
  - the NIV says he “went out.” But the better translation is “He went into”
  - he went and watched them in **hard labor**
  - he could have seen:
    - \* royal power at work
    - \* great storehouses being built
    - \* a well-ordered society, a powerful nation, a strong govt
  - instead he saw “hard labor”
- 1) He knew who he was and who his brethren were
  - 2) He went with them and came to understand their burden and oppression.  
he was not going to be content, to wallow in his education and wealth.  
He had an instinct to make a difference in the world. It was bubbling up in him.

## Reflections:

### 1. God is not mentioned in birth narrative

- reminds me of Esther
- Nevertheless, God isn't far from the scene whether he's mentioned or not.
- God's name doesn't have to be used, for God to be active. God is doing much work in the world where his activity is unnoticed and unnamed.
- Moses survives undetected for the first 3 months of his life.
- He's put into the river Nile that was meant to drown him
- He's treated with maternal kindness by the daughter of the Pharaoh who meant to kill him
- His would be assassin pays his mother to suckle him

- God is never mentioned, but God is always acting in the reeds, in the royal house, in the birthing rooms, at the well, in the desert

\*God is still doing incredible things in the lives of those who place their faith in him.

- God is probably using you in ways you don't know. Moses didn't know God was using him. Pharaoh's daughter didn't know. But God was using them. God may be using you in ways as you follow instincts to snatch, deliver, rescue, save, help those who are in need and are oppressed.

## **2. Irony, Irony, Irony**

- Moses is born despite Pharaoh's attempt to kill.

The Nile (the source of life for Egypt) is abused by Pharaoh so that it becomes a river of death. Still, it becomes for Moses, a river of life.

- Pharaoh ends up paying to have the future deliverer suckled and raised.
- Moses is spared and privileged, but his call and leadership will be resisted and disregarded.
- Most people neglect this chapter but the entire book of Exodus is alluded to here. Disobeying Pharaoh. Moses' intervention into affairs and finding his leadership instincts cause him to pay a heavy price.
- True leadership is usually painful and brutal. Great leaders are seldom seen as great during their course of life.

## **3. Parallel to our deliverer, Jesus Christ.**

- Both born under threat of murder (Pharaoh, Herod)
- Moses needs to get out of Egypt to escape; Jesus went down to Egypt to escape.
- Jesus would be at odds with his people throughout his ministry
- Their childhood is barely mentioned
- Moses was the law-giver. Jesus gave people a new law "That you love one another"
- In many ways their leadership would be rejected

*"He came to that which was his own, but his own received him not" (Jn 1:11).*

## Moses: The Silent Years

### Exodus 2:11-25

#### Connection:

- last week we concluded the birth narrative of Moses
- he was drawn up out of the water by Pharaoh's daughter, then suddenly he's an adult

#### V 11 Moses with his people as an adult

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- he went and watched them in ***hard labor***
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- instead he saw "*hard labor*"
- He knew who he was and who his brethren were
- He went with them and came to understand their burden and oppression.
- he was not going to be content, to wallow in his education and wealth.
- He had an instinct to make a difference in the world. It was bubbling up in him.

#### V 12-13 Instinct for Justice

- we are told the story of Moses killing an Egyptian
- the words in verses 11, 12, 13 all come from same Hebrew root verb, which means "*to smite, or strike*"
- This means that Moses didn't intentionally kill the Egyptian, he only wanted to strike him, bust him in the jaw. He is not a murderer like commonly thought.

- Here we see Moses sense of justice emerging, he is going to be on the side of justice. First in Egyptian over Hebrew (he takes revenge on unjust punishment) among Hebrews (he decides who is right and who is wrong)
- This sense of acting on behalf of the oppressed victim is going to propel him into world history. His instincts are on the side of justice and righteousness. This prevents him from staying home, drinking tea, and going to the club for entertainment. He's a man called, possessed!
- I'm reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the outstanding German theologian, who was given the prestigious chair of theology at Union Seminary in NY in the 1939
- Friends in the church world passionately tried to keep him there for fear that if he returned to Germany, he would lose his life. But Bonhoeffer chose to sail back to Germany. "I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people," he said.

- "Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but cannot make that choice in security."

- In the wartime years that followed, Bonhoeffer's sense of justice compelled him to resist Pharaoh, to seek the overthrow of Pharaoh's empire. Because of this Bonhoeffer, the preacher was arrested, for meddling in politics. (You know preachers aren't supposed to do that!) He spent his last years in prison before being executed at Flossenburg in 1945, shortly before the war ended.

- an instinct for justice can be a dangerous thing

#### **V 14-15      Moses is caught between Hebrews and Egyptians**

- Pharaoh wants to kill him because he has defended the slaves and killed an Egyptian.
- The Hebrews don't want him because they don't trust him. He's not one of them. He's not a slave.
- He is a leader with no one to follow.

- notice that his authority is challenged by this Hebrew rioter. He threatens Moses by claiming all the Hebrews know he killed an Egyptian.

- now you would think the Hebrews would be grateful. Moses smites an Egyptian who was smiting a Hebrew. But this man uses Moses' act against him. The oppressed did not welcome their deliver.

- Moses deftly sees a new landscape: if the Hebrews know about this, certainly the Egyptians know about it to.

The information has the desired effect. It frightens Moses. And he is afraid for good reason. Pharaoh wants to kill him.

### **vv. 15 – 22    Flight to Midian**

- probably on the east side of the Red Sea, a safe distance from Pharaoh
- Moses will live her for 40 years
- it is desert land, deserted land, very different from his luxurious days in Egypt
- as soon as he arrives he comes to a well
- a well is a source of water and life in a desert
- and we can't help but think of the Genesis patriarchs who met their wives at a well
  - Abraham's servant met Rebekah at the well (brought him to Isaac)
  - Jacob met Rachel at the well (Gen 29:9-12)
  - the wells of the ancient world were the eharmony.com of the day
  - it's where you went to pick up chicks. Sort of like a bar today
  
- while there, 7 daughters of the priest of Midian show up to water their flocks
- some rough, rowdy shepherds show up. Push the girls around and out.
- Superman shows up. He came to "their rescue" and watered their flock.
- Moses single-handedly defeats the rascal shepherds who are not gentlemen
- Once again, his instincts to come to the defense of the poor and weak are evident
- Moses can hardly help it. His instincts are on the side of justice and protecting the weak

- the girls go home and the father, now named Reuel (later called Jethro), asks why they have returned so early

- They tell the story of Moses. Two important points should be made:

**1) They identify him as an Egyptian**

- Moses has now self-identified with the Hebrews ("he went to where his own people were" v 11)

-but now his royal education or background still lead others to identify him differently

- he speaks like an Egyptian

- He knows he is a fugitive in Egypt. Egypt can't be his home.

- Yet these daughters are calling him an Egyptian

- It is another sign he is a man without a home. No wonder his first born son is going to be name "*I have become an alien in a foreign land.*" (Gershom)

- people are continually **putting labels on us** to suit themselves

- or simply b/c of ignorance. They don't know any better

- You are a Republican. You are a Democrat.

- You are a housewife. It is a category that limits you.

- You are a preacher.

- You are retired.

- You are divorced.

- You are not from around here.

- We are constantly having to remove the labels people put on us, b/c they are too limiting or just plain wrong.

- God is constantly trying to show us who we really are: his son, his daughter, We are a child of God, made in the image of God.

- Moses was not an Egyptian, even though he was educated in the Egyptian world.

He was a deliverer. God had put it in his DNA and God would summon him to deliver.

## 2) He “snatches” the daughters.

- the NRSV is much too weak. He “helps them”
- *nasal* means “he snatches, rescues, delivers”
- Moses delivers these Midianites daughters in preparation for rescuing the Hebrew nation
- he rescues 7 daughters today
- he will soon rescue 2.5 million Hebrew slaves

## The Father

- Reuel knows a good, potential son-in-law when he hears of one
- this is the kind of man he wants in his family
- he wants “*the snatcher*” for a son-in-law
- he orchestrates very quickly a marriage b/w his daughter Zipporah and Moses
- they marry and have a son
- there is no description, no romance, no honeymoon to the Bahamas
- all of this is to give us a son whose name is “*I have become an alien in a foreign land.*”
- the name is the summation of Moses life to this point
- it’s a very, unfair name to give a son, but the story is not about Gershom.
- the story is about Moses, whose name means “*He drew me up*”
- the one who has been “drawn up from the water” is now an alien in a foreign land
- He is neither Egyptian or Hebrew. Nobody will claim him.
- This is where we find Moses, a mid-life crisis

Half Egyptian – Half Hebrew

Unwanted by everyone

An alien living in a foreign land

when something happened

## The King Dies (vv 23-25)

- 40 years after fleeing Egypt, the king who wanted Moses dead, dies himself

- hostilities have eased (Ex 4:19)
- the social/political situation has changed, just like it does w/ all major regime changes
- it's a season of new possibilities
  
- in the trenches, among the people there is crying and groaning ( 4x)
- this is the first expression of Israel "crying out"
- this is a change on their part. There is now a public crying out
- they name their oppression. They call it "slavery"
- this public outcry is the beginning of their move toward freedom
- all social revolutions come when the people have had enough and they cry aloud and name their oppression
- oppressors prefer their slaves be silent, those who present no social embarrassment
- Silence is a tool the empire wants to maintain.
- Now, the silence is broken. Israel will speak. Israel will cry out and groan.
- Thus, begins the movement toward freedom.
- The beginning of the Exodus begins w/ this cry. The people cried out.

## **God Responds**

- God does 4 things in response to the cry of Israel.

### **1. God hears**

- not a reference to a new hearing sensitivity of God
- the difference b/w "I heard about church bus crash in California last week"
- I heard my daughter cry for help in the swimming pool.
- God heard in such a way that elicited a response

### **2. God remembered**

- doesn't mean a jogging of the divine memory as if God had forgotten
- Difference b/w "I remember Lincoln was re-elected President during the Civil War
- And, "I remembered my wedding anniversary and bought my wife some

flowers.

- This is a memory that compels a response
- God remembered his promises to Abraham: Land, Great Nation, Progeny
- The cries in Exodus causes God to remember Genesis.
- God will connect present slaves with old promises.

### **3. God saw**

- same word used in 2:11 when Moses saw/watch his own people in hard labor
- this is not a glance
- "I saw some trash on I-40 on the way to work"
- "I saw Elizabeth's car broke down on the side of I-40"
- Ex 3:7 *"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt, and I am concerned about her suffering."*

### **4. God knew**

- the NIV translates *yada* to be "was concerned."
- not a very good translation
- it means to share an experience w/ someone so much that their experience is your experience
- someone tells you about their war experience. You say, "Yes, I know, I too was wounded in battle."
- same verb used to describe when Adam and Eve came together and conceived a son. "Adam knew Eve."
- intimate, personal, caring knowledge

### **So what?**

- we are on the edge of our seats
- God is going to do something. We just know it. - But what? How?
- the political/social reality has changed. God is seeing, hearing, remembering, and knowing. Something is about to explode
- we have a social situation where the oppressed are finding their voice, couple w/ a God who is finding his memory.

## **The Call**

- All he has is this “Call” on his life.
- And when God calls, whatever your name, you can’t help but listen.
- whether you are perceived as an Egyptian or Hebrew, if God calls you to be a deliverer, the sooner you respond, the better.

## **The Call of Moses**

### **Exodus 3:1-12**

Update: **Why Midian?** Midian is where Moses:

1. Saved Jethro’s daughters from the Egyptian shepherds
  - He snatched them from these oppressive Egyptians. Remember that word “snatched.”
  - When the 7 daughters returned the father asked, “And you let a guy like that get away? For goodness sake, go get him!”
2. Met Jethro and married his daughter Zipporah
  - Jethro also called “Reuel”
  - Zipporah is the oldest daughter
  - This is no demon-possessed pedophile. He takes the oldest!
3. Called by God to be his agent in delivering his people
  - Moses would stay in Midian for 40 years (age 40-80)
  - See map of Midian (geography not prime consideration!)
  - Midian was a son of Abraham and Keturah (Gen 25:1-6)
  - His descendants settled in the territory east and south of the Jordan River and Dead Sea. Likely the Arabian Peninsula.



**APP:** we probably just need to tend to our flock and the experiences will come without our forcing them. Quiet trust in God's providence.

**v.3** Moses curiosity was kindled just enough to cause him to ask "Why?"

- why was that bush burning but not being consumed
- Fire will become a symbol of God's presence.
- Ex. 19:18, the Lord descended on Mt. Sinai before he gave Moses the 10 Commandments. Cf Ps. 18:8

**v.4** when God had his attention he called to Moses. Notice God didn't call Moses until he had his attention.

- this is the scary part of theophany. God doesn't normally give us an experience of his presence just to show us "He's real" or to satisfy our curiosity. When God reveals Himself to us, you can assume a call is coming. The first words spoken by God in Exodus are "Moses. Moses."

**Illustration:** My own sense of call. Fear. Awe. Why me? Woe is me!

**v. 5** Moses is told by God he's on holy ground

1. is it because the dirt and clay are holy
2. is it because that geographic area is holy

No, it's holy because God has revealed himself to Moses at that place!

**App:** \*anywhere we experience God is a holy place. It can be anywhere: garden, home, church, school, mtn, beach, sanctuary. Think of the place where you have experienced God. Don't you want to go back there. Return?

\*God required that Moses respond to that holy encounter. He had to take his shoes off in reverence. (Josh 5:13-15). God requires that we respond to his divine presence as well. That's why we bow our heads.

**III:** Mr. Clyde Bristow. Brylcreem. Black shoes. White socks. Big Bible. "Bow your heads."

"Because we're not worthy to look at him. He's God and we're not!"

**v.6** God tells Moses who he is. Not his name yet.

- God reveals that he’s not some abstract being or idea but that he’s
  1. The God of his Father (Amram) connects him back to Egypt
  2. Abr, Is, Jac, connects him to the history of his people and the promises God had made with them.
- Moses hides his face. He’s afraid to look at “The God” (the definite article is placed in front of Elohim. Moses recognizes the God of his Father and his fathers is The God
  1. We can’t force ourselves into experiences with God
  2. We can experience God anywhere. The experience is what makes a place holy, not the place itself.
  3. God requires something of us when he reveals Himself to us.

## **II. The Call of God (v 7-10)**

**v.7** – the Lord begins his speech.

1. God has seen their misery/affliction/oppression
2. God has heard their cries
3. God “knows intimately” their sufferings
  - Why did God allow this in the first place?
  - Why did God allow it to go on for so long?

\*We don’t know. That question is not answered. But we do know that God is somehow involved intimately with the suffering, to the point that he suffers and grieves with us.

– but the urgency of the need is met with an equally mighty force or an even mightier force. The power of God.

**v.8** God Himself has come down. He’s down from his throne in heaven to the burning thornbush somewhere near Midian. The God of the universe is in Midian to do something amazing for a group of slaves. He is going to rescue (i.e. to snatch away, often with overtones of violence).

\*We can’t explain evil in the world, but we can be assured that God is with us (Immanuel) and that he’s not content to sit and just watch us from his throne. God is in the midst of his people (Even now!)

- and God isn't merely going to rescue them from something bad. He's going to send them to something good.
- "flowing with milk and honey", a phrase used about 20 times to designate Canaan as a land of promise and productivity.
- He identifies this land as presently inhabited by 6 people groups. In other words, this is a particular land. It has boundaries.

**V 10** – the official call of Moses,

- This is the whole point. This is the reason God revealed himself to Moses.
- God wants Moses to be his agent of deliverance
- This must've stunned Moses when he heard it. God had just been talking about knowing, and hearing, and seeing the plight of his people. He had just promised rescue and deliverance and entrance to a promised land. But suddenly the "pious promise" becomes "rigorous demand." In one brief exchange, the grand intention of God had become a specific responsibility.
- It is Moses who will do what Yahweh says.
- It is Moses who will run the risks that Yahweh seemed ready to take.

I will send you!

- It is Moses, not God, who will meet Pharaoh!
- It is Moses, not God, who will bring out God's people!
- It is Moses who will act on behalf of God to save God's people.

It is the mysterious joining of God and human history. The joining is done through the fragile, fallible body and mind of Moses, on whom everything now depends.

**III. Protest to God (V 11)**

- Moses feels inadequate. "Who am I?"
- It's easy to understand isn't it? Moses is being called to return to Egypt where he is a fugitive. He's also being called to challenge and confront the imperial power of Pharaoh and essentially destabilize an entire nation.
- First of 4 excuses not to obey God

- Moses' objections look to a past reality, while God counters with a new future possibility.

\*we protest to God at times because we're focused on ourselves and not on God.

We're focused on the past and God is focused on the future.

We're overly worried about our inadequacies instead of confidently aware of the perfect adequacy of God.

#### **IV. The Assurance of God (v 12)**

- Moses' emphatic "I" is met with an equally emphatic "I" by God
- "ci" because, the point is "I am" has sent you.
- The "I" of Moses melts in the presence of the "I" of God.
- Then God makes a promise to Moses, gives him a sign: one day when the people of Israel have been brought out of Egypt they shall come and experience me here on this mountain. I.e, your experience will become their experience.

\*notice that the sign requires faith and service first, the sign will be given after Moses has led the people out of bondage.

- many times we want the sign first. God give me a sign and then I'll go and then I'll serve. But many times it's in the doing and in the serving that we find the sign of God's presence.

#### **III. My call. Fear. Trembling. Signs**

- Yes. It was after I went to seminary.
- It was after I said no to a career in math or law
- It was after I began working at my first church
- It was after I leaped into the arms of God

God gave me a sign. People were experiencing the presence and power of God with me. People heard God's voice with me. They trembled and were afraid of God with me. They were saved by the power of God in my midst. That was my assurance that God had called me.

## The Divine Name Revealed

Exodus 3:13-22

### Reminder:

- Moses has encountered God at the burning bush
- God declares he has seen the misery
  - heard them crying
  - concerned about their suffering
  - I have come to rescue them
  - Bring them up out of the land
  - The cry of the Israelites has reached me
- So now ..... Go! ,ie “You go, Moses”
  - “I am sending you to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”
- it is Moses who will do what Yahweh said
- Moses will run the risks. Moses will put his life on the line
- “After the massive intrusion of God, the exodus has suddenly become a human enterprise.” It is Moses, not God who will meet with Pharaoh.

## I. Moses Resistance (v 11)

### 1. Who am I?

- I’m a nobody.
- This is the first of 4 excuses Moses offers to God in light of his call.
- Actually, he’s not. He’s a Morehead Scholar. Access to the finest of everything
- Raised by Pharaoh’s own daughter
- He’s a hybrid, a blend of Hebrew and Egyptian
- Hebrew by blood, Egyptian by culture.
- He’s a hybrid of good and evil. Remember he has killed an Egyptian. He’s a fugitive.
- Yet, he feels like a nobody.

**Application:** Is it any wonder that we often feel that way when God calls

- I remember this was my initial reaction to the call of God. Who am I? I'm normal.
- I wasn't raised by Pharaoh's daughter. My parents were working class people.
- I liked sports and girls.

But notice: Moses' objections look to a past reality, while God counters with a new future possibility.

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- It was after I said no to a career in math or law
- It was after I began working at my first church
- It was after I leaped into the arms of God
- God gave me a sign.
- People were experiencing the presence and power of God with me.

- People heard God's voice with me.
  - They trembled and were afraid of God with me.
  - They were saved by the power of God in my midst.
  - That was my assurance that God had called me.
- Some of you may be looking for a sign to act. Perhaps God is calling you to act in order to find the sign. Take the leap. Jump into the unknown.

## **II. Second Act of Resistance: Asking for the Name (v 13)**

- This is Moses 2<sup>nd</sup> question to God. The first question God would not answer. He only met the question with an affirmation of his presence. Moses first question was "Who am I?" Now he asks perhaps the most important question, "Who are you?"
- A legitimate question. Why ask for the name of this God?

### **2 Reasons**

#### **1. Polytheistic environment**

- God has revealed himself as Abraham's God, Isaac's God, Jacob's God
- God has promised to make Abraham and his descendants a blessing to the world
- But in Egypt, there is already a claim of divinity that is powerful.
- In fact, Pharaoh himself claims to have divine descent. To date, there has been no evidence that the God of the Fathers is a match for the Egyptian gods. In the time of Abraham it was the Abraham's God against other local deities. Now, Yahweh will be pitted with the world's strongest power, undergirded they believed by a divine power that had yet to be matched.
- God of Pharaoh (or Pharaoh as divine) vs. God of the slaves

#### **2. The name revealed the nature and character of a god or person.**

- many of the names in the OT reveal the nature and character of the person
- Adam = Man
- Israel = He who strives with God
- Abram = exalted Father
- Abraham = Father of multitudes

- So when Moses asked God's name he was asking for much more than a title. He was asking "Who are you?" What are you like? What can you do?

- In essence Moses was asking for **authority**. Remember he wasn't in good graces with the Egyptians or Hebrews (2:14-15). Why should they listen to him? He had to have some authority. If he was going to do something that crazy he had to have authority.

- he is essentially being asked to lead Israel to engage in massive civil disobedience against the most powerful force in the known world.

- he is going to need something more than the promise-making God of Genesis

- he's going to need a personal name.

- this will provide the credibility and authority he needs to carry out this revolution

\*Did you know we have authority?

- remember how Jesus prefaced the Great Commission (Mt 28:18)

*"All authority has been given to me....."*

*"Therefore, go and make disciples"*

- Jesus has the authority, but then he sends us. He authorizes us to do his work

- to work for justice, help the poor, help the oppressed, give lost, and share the Gospel.

- we were given authority at Pentecost (Acts 1:8).

- We have been given power to be God's witnesses.

- in our post-modern world with competing voices and competing claims for authority, we can become intimidated. We hesitate to say "Thus says the Lord."

- we hope to avoid being characterized as arrogant and a zealot.

- we do not live in a culture that gladly hears the words, "Thus says the Lord."

### **Lighthouse illustration:**

In U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, the magazine of the Naval Institute, Frank Koch illustrates the importance of obeying the Laws of the Lighthouse. Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was

serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow."

"Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.

The lookout replied, "Steady, Captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advice you change course twenty degrees."

Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees."

The captain said, "Send: 'I'm a captain, change course twenty degrees.'"

"I'm a seaman second-class," came the reply. "You had better change course twenty degrees."

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send: I'm a battleship, Change course twenty degrees."

Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

We changed course.

Our God is the light of the world. And he has commissioned us to be the light of the world. (Mt 5:14) This doesn't give us the authority to do anything we want, but we are authorized to do what God wants us to do. The best way to know what that is, is to read the Bible carefully, in the context of a believing, obedient community of faith.

### **III. Revealing the Name (v 14-15)**

- Endless interpretations of this name in English. One of most puzzling phrases in all the Hebrew Bible

- *eyheh aser ehyeh* =

first person singular of imperfect verb "to be" (hayah) + relative pronoun + first person singular

- i.e. shows continual action “I amming”
    - not “I was”
    - not “I will be”
- “I am” right now, I have been and I’m going to be” Is. 52:6

## **A. Significance of the Name**

### **1. God names himself**

- Moses doesn’t give God his name
- all humans are given their name by someone else
- even the gods, of that day, were named by their followers
- sun God, wind God, god of fertility, Pharaoh
- this is a self-assertion that no one gives me my name. I name myself

### **2. God’s name connotes eternalness**

- *I am who I am*. Not “I used to be” or “I will be”
- God always has been, continues to be, and will always be
- there’s a faithfulness here
- God doesn’t change in God’s essence
- God may change God’s mind, but not God’s essence, not God’s being
- the NT equivalent of this is “*JC is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Heb 13:7)
- in fact, John’s gospel reveals, Jesus Christ is co-eternal with God the Father
- Application: We don’t have to worry about God changing, getting tired, becoming weak, blowing away
  - we can rest assured that God was, is, and shall be faithful to God’s self

By giving Israel his name, God is making himself accessible to the people

### **3. God is accessible**

- Moses asks and God answered
- this is going to be an interactive relationship
- it’s not all God.

- Yes, God reveals himself in the burning bush to Moses at the beginning
- God takes the initiative. But God also responds. We can go deeper with God
- God will tell us his name
- There is something personal, accessible about that.
- If we don't know someone's name, we can't claim intimacy

Application: Do you know how it's a hassle for people to get your name, SSN email address, phone number. You don't want people to have access to you all the time.

(5 women have access to me all the time)

- now we can come boldly before the throne of God
- of course, there is a difference b/w a name and a person
- there is still a mystery about God. We know the name, but God is still holy!

## **B. Etymology of Yahweh**

- how do we move from "I am who I am" to Yahweh
- v 14 "I am" = H W H Y (read from right to left)
- YHWH = tetragrammaton
- in the 6<sup>th</sup> century a group of Hebrew scholars called "The Masoretes" (from the Hebrew word "tradition") gathered all the known OT texts and created one authoritative text
- they added vowel sounds so future generations would know how to pronounce the words
- they did this by adding dots and lines above and below the letters
- the text they produced, which took 4 centuries to complete, is considered the authoritative OT text to this day
- the dots and lines added to the tetragrammaton lead to the pronunciation of Yahweh.
- how does this become "LORD"
- faithful Jews weren't supposed to say "The Name"
- so the skipped over the word or they said the Hebrew word "Adonai"

- LORD = Yahweh, the personal name of God
- Lord – Adonai, which means lord or master
- Ex 4:13        O, Adonai, please send someone else to do it.
- Ex 4:14        Then Yahweh’s anger burned against Moses

### III. Spreading the Name (v 16)

- God tells Moses to go tell the elders of Israel his name
- earlier God had said to tell this to the Israelites
- then he says to tell this to the elders
- in both cases he makes a point to connect this name to the God of Abraham
- *“Yahweh, the God of your fathers”*
- the fathers are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- Moses knows more than Abraham and the fathers
- God didn’t reveal his personal name to Abraham.
- Now the elders need to know this.
- A sign of progressive revelation
- the Early Apostles would know more than Moses.
- They had seen, met, and talked with Jesus.
- God continues to reveal himself to humankind progressively.
- The pinnacle of that is the life of Jesus Christ

### IV. Illustrating the Name (v 17-22)

- Illustrated by revealing what he’s going to do and what’s going to happen in the days ahead.
- Basically illustrating it by revealing the mighty deeds he’s going to enact before their eyes.

**1. Bring you up (v 17).** (Phrase that Septuagant translates as “exodus”) There is going to be an exiting or Exodus from Egypt. God is going to do this. Redeem them from Egyptian bondage.

**2. Elders will listen (v 18).** (Comes back to authority)

- They won't always listen, but you can be tough enough to hang in there when they won't because you know you've been called by God. Even though you were raised an Egyptian, under the court of Pharaoh, the elders of Israel will follow you. Not follow you well, but follow you nonetheless.
- Illus - - they say there's a high correlation because pastors who have a strong sense of calling and their ability to endure the rigors of ministry.

### **3. You'll ask for a 3 day pass (v 18)**

- this is unlikely to happen.
- a strange request to leave for 3 days to worship in the desert
- Yahweh knows the Pharaoh will reject this request
- only a mighty hand will compel him to release the Hebrew slaves
- Why did God make this request?
- God is continually working in human context. He interacts, adjusts, negotiates
- God was negotiating with Pharaoh just like he is negotiating with Moses
- Just like he will be negotiating with the Hebrews
- God is continually making accommodations for us.
- Ex: God wanted you to become committed to him years ago. Only now are you doing it. God has been patient with us.
  - How often have we said, "I should have done this years ago."
  - Men finally going to church and reading the Bible
  - Women finally replacing reading gossip magazines with Xtn devotionals

### **4. Stretch out His hand. (v 20)**

- It won't be a man-made exodus, it won't be Moses' doings.
- God's hand will be the power behind this revolution like the world has never seen before or since.
- God will do "extraordinary deeds". This is a concise summary of the plague narrative.

### **5. They will have legitimate plunder ( v 21)**

- You’ll take some of “Egypt” with you when you go.
- They’ve worked hard. They deserve to take something with them.
- This is in fact, what happened (cf 11:2-3)
- Obviously this would take a miracle. This may have been a bigger miracle than the crossing of the Red Sea. Who is going to give a bunch of slaves their silver, gold, and clothing?
- One of the lesser known miracles is that the people were favorably disposed toward Israel. Pharaoh was not, but the people were.
- God has something better for us. When he leads us to a new life, we don’t go empty handed. He supplies our needs. When we step out in faith, we won’t go w/o blessing.

### **Conclusion**

\*More than a divine name was given.

- Moses was given the authority of the God of Creation, the God of History, and the God of his Fathers, to lead a group of slaves to a land of promise.
- It would be through the authority of God that this took place.
- The name of God hasn’t changed.
- Thus the nature and purpose of God hasn’t changed either.
- We are called to go with God where he wants us to go, even to the scary places, knowing the unchanging God will go with us.

### **Addendum**

#### **What’s in a Name?**

- Yates: Matthew Tyson Yates, the first SBC missionary to go to a foreign country. At the age of 28 years old he sailed to China. “God gave him a big body, because his big heart required it,” said a friend. Born and raised in Mt. Pisgah community about 20 miles from Durham. So venerated by those who knew him that his stump (holy place of prayer) was considered a safe place to stand during the time of a storm.

- This church wants to perpetuate a sense of call to share the Gospel with the world, like Matthew Tyson Yates, and the disciples who followed Jesus.
- Baptist: means freedom.
  1. **Church Freedom:** freedom of the local church to make its own decisions under the guidance of the H.S. No other church will control or lead us. We make our decisions about pastor, theology, morality. It's our responsibility and privilege.
  2. **Bible Freedom:** we perpetuate the Baptist ideal that each person comes to their bible and has the freedom to interpret it for himself or herself without the interference of pastor, priest, or president. It's our responsibility and privilege.
  3. **Soul Freedom:** We believe that each person is responsible for the decisions they make about God. We don't believe we are automatically born Xtns. We believe you must be born again to be an Xtn and therefore we welcome into the church and baptize only those individuals who have personally and consciously accepted Christ as their Savior.
  4. **Religious Freedom:** Baptists believe in a free church in a free state. We believe the ideal circumstances for the church and the state are for them to be separate from one another. The church should not control or dominate the state, nor should the state attempt to control or dominate the church. Each is a legitimate organization in the eyes of God and we should give due honor to both.  
  
Freedom is the watchword. The only true religion is the non-coerced kind of religion. Only a religion that has confidence in its God will support and promote the idea of religious freedom.

**Church:** comes from the Greek word "ekklesia" which means "the called out ones." We are the ones that have been called out from the world to live and bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our mission in life is to be faithful to this calling. It is our motivation, the motives that drives and inspires us.

Names are important:

- We gave our daughters biblical names to express our love for the Bible and our hope that the Bible becomes the book that guides and directs their lives. In the Bible, we read about the God of History and the Jesus of Nazareth.

## **More Addendum**

### **A. Explanation of the Name (v 15-16)**

- “Lord” in verse 15 derives from the “I Am” in verses 12-14.
- “I Am” = *hayah*
- Scholars call this the Tetragrammaton = YHWH. We pronounce it “Yahweh.”

Later the Greeks would transliterate it to be “Jehovah.” All other names for God in the Bible are essentially generic names. This is the name that reveals God’s personal self-disclosure, ie this is the one who reveals the nature and character of God.

- This is the same God who made the covenant with the Fathers of the faith (AB, Isa, Jac). Though he didn’t reveal his name to them (cf 6:2-3). Therefore, this God who “the self-existent One”, who is independent of all others, is also the God of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This eternal God is also a personal God, i.e. a God who makes covenants with particular people.
- Letting Moses know He’s not a new God, but he has revealed more to Moses than he did to the Fathers
- At the same time this is the God of the Fathers, He’s to be the God of the sons and daughters of all generations (that’s us) the God of the sons and daughters of all generations (that’s us)
- Just as God revealed more to Moses than to Abraham, he revealed more to the Apostles than he did to Moses. The Apostles had the glorious privilege to encounter God in the flesh, through Jesus Christ. And we know more than the Apostles! (They didn’t have the Bible)

### **Did Joseph contribute to the enslavement of the Hebrew people?**

The Joseph narrative of Genesis essentially concludes with Genesis 45. However, the last few chapters of Genesis reveal some final acts of Joseph regarding the Empire and his

family that would have future repercussions. Joseph had become an able administrator in Pharaoh's Empire by the end of this narrative. He was considered second in command in Egypt. A part of his administrative genius (cunning/guile?) was revealed when yet another famine hit Egypt and the surrounding territories. This famine is what brought Joseph's family into Egypt as they sought a means to buy food. Upon their reunion with Joseph they settled in Egypt and were given the best property available (Gen 47:11).

The famine increased so that all Egypt and Canaan came to Joseph (i.e., the government) to buy food he (the government) had stockpiled. When the people ran out of money, they came to Joseph and sold him their livestock so they could continue to barter for food. When this food ran out and they had no other bartering material they returned to Joseph, in despair, and offered to sell their land and their bodies in order "to live," i.e. purchase food to live. Joseph bought their land and their bodies, thereby making them indentured servants to the state. They were sort of like tenant farmers in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who lived on land they didn't own and raised crops that weren't theirs, with the promise they would give a portion of their crops to their owners. Joseph enacted a tax system that indentured people and charged them 20 percent of all they grew. The people were happy with the deal. They had no alternative (Gen 47).

It's hard to imagine a land filled with Egyptians who were all indentured servants living alongside Hebrews who had both their own property and were fruitful. In all likelihood, this tax reform system enacted by Joseph evolved (expanded?) over the years. It is also likely that over the next few generations (Joseph to Moses) the dynamics of the economy shifted from Egyptian indentured servitude to Hebrew enslavement. Finally, by the time a new dynasty began which "did not know Joseph" there was already a tradition of slavery. Thus the question that scholars have asked is "Did the tax system enacted by Joseph, which essentially was a form of indentured servitude, lead to the enslavement of the Hebrews?"

It seems that Joseph did contribute to the enslavement of his own people through the implementation of policies of indentured servitude. His were probably not the first policies that used indentured servants, nor would they be the last. But it's important to note these policies do not escape the collective memory of Israel. Apparently, the new Pharaoh of Exodus 1 escalated the oppressive nature of the economic system in new and ruthless ways. He harbored great fear about the Hebrew people and he led his nation to fear and resent them. Thus, the whole nation became afraid of the Hebrews and increased the bitterness of their lives all the more. This new Pharaoh was ruthless. Sadly, it may have been the administrative ingenuity of Joseph that paved the way for more bitter practices later in history.

## Negotiation of Call

### Exodus 4

#### Reminder:

- God has called Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead the Israelites in massive civil disobedience
- In the process God revealed his name to Moses: "I am who I am."
- the revelation connects the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the one and only God of all creation
- God is the great "I AM"
- Moses continues to resist his call to go to Pharaoh, but God answers all his resistance with theological affirmation
- God even promises the Egyptians will voluntarily offer plunder to the Israelites when they walk out of Egypt
- in chp 4 we come to the final negotiations of this call
- I've divided the chapter, for teaching purposes, into 3 main sections
  1. The Signs for the Leader
  2. The Substitute for the Leader
  3. The Assassination Attempt of the Leader
- we'll go in reverse order so I can address this assassination text and not run out of time

(Read entire chapter) v 1-17 and 18-31

#### III. The Assassination Attempt

- Ex 4:24-26 is one of the most enigmatic set of verses in all the Bible
- *"At a lodging place on the way, the LORD was about to kill him."*
- we are not prepared for this. Comes out of the blue
- we want to go back and see if we've missed anything
  
- 2:15 *"Pharaoh sought to kill Moses"*
- 4:19 it's safe to go back to Egypt b/c those who sought to kill Moses have died
- it turns out, it's not so safe, when the one trying to kill you is..... GOD !!
- in the middle of the night, while Moses is on his way back to Egypt with his family, God tries to kill him
- what is this ??
- What could God's motivation possibly be?
- The history of interpretation of the this passage is the search for this motivation

- rather than treat you like a seminary class and present you with multiple interpretations over the centuries, I want to present my understanding based on my cumulative review of the options

- remember, when we are reading Exodus we are reading literature, good literature, artistic literature
- this is not simply a mundane chronological record of events
- the writer is sophisticated and uses multiple literary tools to tell the story of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage

### **Flashback**

- remember that Moses was sent into the Nile as a baby
- he had no sooner come through the birth canal than he was put in the ark to save his life and redeem Israel.
- This was a flashback to the story of Noah's Ark in Genesis
- Just as God saved through world through Noah's Ark, God is going to save Israel through Moses' ark
- the literary term for this is a flashback.
- the author is trying to connect the latter with the former.

### - Here we have **foreshadowing**

- What is going to be the great event of the Moses' story? The Passover
- the night before Israel is freed from bondage, there is going to be death in Egypt
- God is going to send a death spirit into Egypt to kill the first born sons
- this spirit of death will be indiscriminatory
- it will kill Egyptian babies and Hebrew babies
- the only protection is the blood of the paschal lamb to be spread on the doorposts
- only the blood of the lamb will save life
- the death spirit will try to kill life, and succeed

### - here we have foreshadowing of this event

- the only way to be spared is through the blood of the lamb
- the identity of male sons is through cutting off the foreskin
- Zipporah, the wife of Moses, comes to save the day
- she acts as the redeemer, circumcising her son, and taking that blood to touch Moses' feet.
- the blood on his feet becomes the means to protect him from death
- there is life in the blood.

- the blood of her son's circumcision becomes the means of protection for Moses
- he is spared b/c algorithm of divine and human activity
  - his son has been wounded
  - his son's identity has been secured and his father's life saved
  - his wife has acted as an agent on his behalf
  - she has taken a knife to her firstborn son to save the firstborn son of Israel

- all of this is literary foreshadowing for the Great Passover when the blood of the lamb will spare the people who are under threat by the spirit of death sent by God

- the people of Israel will be spared from death and the firstborn sons of Egypt will die for the sake of Israel
- we are being drawn into a story about life and death
- this is serious. God is a holy God
- the call of God is dangerous, b/c God is so demanding

- the foreshadowing continues by anticipating the atoning value of blood with the sin offerings

- *"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."* (Lev 17:11)

- Moses' life is spared, as Israel's life will be spared, as our lives are spared by the atoning blood of the sacrificial lamb of God."

"This is a divine demonstration of the seriousness of the matter upon which God and Moses are about to embark: a life-and-death struggle in which Israel's very life is imperiled."

Terrence Fretheim

- Application: The bottom line

God's call on our lives is very serious

- while we live in a culture that trivializes faith, the Bible does not

- God's call is a life and death call

- Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but*

*whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"* (Mt 16:24-26)

## II. The Substitute (4:13-17, 27-31)

- Moses final plea to God is to send someone else
- he has questioned his capabilities (3:11)
- he has asked for God's identity to be revealed more clearly (3:13)
- he has asked what kind of authority would undergird his leadership (4:1)
- God has been patient.
- He has met all Moses' resistance w/ assurances, signs, and promises
- finally we come to see, Moses simply doesn't want to do this.
- it has nothing to do with all the excuses
- like excuses a girl gives a guy she doesn't want to go with:
  - \* I'm busy
  - \* I'm doing my hair
  - \* My mother want let me go their
  - \* I just want to be friends
  - \* You're last girl friend would be mad
- Moses, finally says, "Send someone else
- And God got angry
- And you sort of expect God to blow up, to blow him away, to rebuke him slap him around a little bit
- but notice how God accommodates
- "What about your brother?"
  
- **God has to resort to Plan B.**
- God had chosen Moses. He wanted Moses. He recognized Moses' leadership capabilities
- But Moses is stubborn, reluctant, and lacking in confidence
- He's not accepting this assignment
- So God relents and brings in a partner
- He doesn't replace Moses. He adds Aaron.
  
- **God will not override our free will.**
- it was not his first choice to add Aaron
- But God goes with what is possible in life of Moses' resistance
- God is still going to redeem his people
- He is only altering his activity in light of human activity
  
- Meeting with PMBA pastors at Ardmore
- learned of the disturbing number of churches that are dying

- \* fewer Xtns in the Triad (like everywhere else)
  - \* postmodern views on truth that undermine the gospel
  - \* unwillingness to change
  - \* those churches will die.
  
  - \* But THE CHURCH will not die
  - \* It will survive, emerge, and be salt and light to the world
  - \* Other forms of church will emerge
  - \* New, multi-cultural, ancient-liturgical, contemporary and flexible
- Even when churches fail and resist God, God finds other churches

- Plan B works for a while
- Aaron speaks and performs signs (4:30)
- and the people believe Aaron
- and they worshipped God
- eventually Aaron is going to recede into the background, but he is God's Plan B for the moment.

## I. The Signs

- The Questioning Continues: What if they don't believe me?
- context reveals he is referring to the Israelites elders, not Pharaoh
- *"What if they don't believe me?"*
- God has already said the elders would listen to him (3:18)
- so we see Moses incredible call filled with understandable doubt
- history will reveal his doubt was justified
- the people will listen to Moses (4:31)
- the people will not listen to Moses (6:9, 6:12)
- I'm reminded of the prelude to the Great Commission
- the disciples meet the resurrected Lord and *"worshipped him; but some doubted."*
- we are all such a mix aren't we. We worship and we doubt.
- we are like the elders of Israel.
- No wonder Moses is asking these questions of "What if they don't believe me?"

### God's Open Relationship to Moses

- God responds graciously to Moses
- God could've said, "I have already told you the elders will listen to you."  
     *"I have revealed my great name and you still are doubting me?"*

- God's response indicates this will be a *real* relationship
- this relationship isn't a one way street. It's not all about God setting the rules and Moses obeying the rules
- there is negotiation, give and take
- God enters a real, give and take relationship with Moses.
- Moses can ask questions. Challenge God. Even rebuke God. God can repent!!

- so the Lord gives Moses some signs
- Take note: Moses didn't ask for a sign.

Moses only offered a question. What if they don't believe me?  
He doesn't ask for a sign.

- the signs are a gift from God
- they are intended to bolster Moses' confidence
- they are intended to help the people believe: (eg 4:5 "this is so they can believe")
- there are 3 signs:

1. Staff to Snake

- staff will turn into a snake

2. Hand to Leprosy and Back

3. Water to Blood

- this 3<sup>rd</sup> sign is a contingency plan: "If they don't believe the 2 signs,.....take water"
- this is going to be an interactive relationship b/w God and Moses
- the future is not set. There is room for human decision.
- God is interacting with Moses to prepare for multiple options

**Application:**

God takes us seriously

God really listens to us

God is affected by us

God wants a real relationship with us, interactive, serious, bold

- even in our deficiencies, God takes us seriously

- in our deficiencies God works, he overcomes our weaknesses

## **Story of Derwin Gray**

- growing up in San Antonio, Derwin Gray believed in god -- the god of football
- the game was the ticket to his way out of poverty, chaos, and violence
- raised by his grandmother who was a Jehovah's Witness
- he was not poor. He was "po."
- at age of 13 he decided to do something with his life.
- play football.
- He was good. It gave him love. It gave him a mission. I gave him identity.
  
- he accepted a football scholarship to BYU.
- he met a beautiful girl his freshman year.
- they married at the end of his junior year. It was the first wedding he attended
- became an All-American. Made BYU Hall of Fame
- 1993, drafted by the Indianapolis Colts

## **Naked Preacher**

- linebacker on the team, who showered and asked, "Do you know Jesus?"
  - "That the naked preacher. (Steve Grant)
  - one day the Naked Preacher came up to him after practice
  - Rookie D. Grey, do you know Jesus?"
  - "I'm a good person." "Only person in my family to go to college."
1. "And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good. Only the Father in heaven is good.'"
  2. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- "Your telling me the standard is God? Perfection? "I'm in big trouble."

## **Living Witness**

- watched Steve Grant live out his faith the next 5 years
- advice to teammates
- marriage
- raising kids
- I saw my money and fame could not bring me peace, security, and happiness
- at the end of training camp in Anderson, Ind in 1997 he gave his life to Christ

**- Today**

- retired from the NFL after 6 seasons
  - began to travel to youth events and speaks
  - miracle, not only b/c of his non-Christian background, but he was a stutterer
  - eventually God gave him a love for the church
  - he planted a church in SC.
  - 2010, 11, and 12 it was one of the fastest growing churches in America.
- 
- God took a stutterer with a mixed background of dislocation and great education and changed people's lives
  - God continues to work through our weaknesses, despite our weaknesses
  - our task is to offer God our weaknesses, and trust he will use them for his glory.

## Extra Stuff

### God's Signs are Contextual

- the signs are interesting. The signs are similar to what the Egyptian magicians teach.
  - God is going Contextual.
  - God is going to adopt the Egyptian practices, baptize them for his own purposes
  - we will see the Egyptian magicians can perform these signs
- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 7:11 | "did the same thing by their secret arts" (after the snake/staff)  |
| 7:22 | "did the same things by their secret arts" (after the water/blood) |
| 8:7  | "did the same things by their secret arts" (after the frogs)       |
| 8:18 | "tried to produce gnats by their secret arts"... (after the gnats) |

### Confrontation with Pharoah

#### Exodus 5:1-6:1

**Context:** comes from chp 4

- Moses is still resisting the call of God in Midian, making claims of inadequacy. God does a couple of things for Moses

#### 1) Provides a staff (Power)

- not just a stick, this is a symbol of God's power
- this is the staff that will be raised to part the Red Sea

#### 2) Provides Aaron (Words)

- Moses claimed not to be a good speaker.
- God said that he would provide words for Moses
- But God also provided Aaron, "I know he can speak fluently."
- Aaron will be in submission to Moses just as Moses is in submission to God
- Moses is going to meet Aaron in the desert, at the "mountain of God"
- together they assemble the elders of Israel and tell them all that Yahweh has told Moses. The elders believed Moses and Aaron and they bowed down to worship Yahweh.

#### 3) Moses return to Egypt (ultimate testing)

- Moses carried all his family and the staff of God back to Egypt
- 4:24 "Yahweh encounter him and sought to kill him."
  - a. speaking of Gershom who was not circumcised yet
  - b. an attack upon Moses because Moses had not be circumcised
  - c. a justification for the change of circumcison from a rite performed just before marriage, to one performed shortly after a male is born.

- “bridegroom of blood you are to me” is a marital phrase for the male who was circumcised at the marriage rite

- this account is similar to the account of Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac or Jacob wrestling with God at Jabbok. They all reveal the utter seriousness of serving and following Yahweh. It’s deadly business.

Now the narrative moves from Midian to Egypt, to the court of Pharaoh. We are presented with a struggle for political and social power. This will struggle will be on Pharaoh’s terms. We will see the brutality and violence of this Pharaoh.

### **I. First Confrontation with Pharaoh: Moses and Aaron (5:1-14)**

- “after this”, i.e.

- 1) receiving the power of the staff and words
- 2) becoming partners with Aaron
- 3) surviving the tests that Yahweh put forth
- 4) informing the elders of Israel about all that God had said
- 5) worshiping Yahweh with all the elders of Israel

- then Moses confronts Pharaoh

#### **Request:**

- Moses and Aaron say this. Not just Moses. He has a partner. They are the mouthpiece for Yahweh. They are speaking, but it really is God speaking.

- “Thus says Yahweh,” a prophetic declaration signaling authority

- Moses requests that the Israelites be released so they can “celebrate a festival”

- he gives no time, no time lines

- Why wilderness? Because this was the command of God. Yes, but why go to the wilderness and not worship in Egypt. Because the worship of Israel would be repugnant to the Egyptians. It would create strife.

Furthermore, they wanted to be in a place outside the jurisdiction of Pharaoh. Their worship would be to Yahweh, thus delegitimizing the ultimate authority of Pharaoh. This is not only a theological request (worship). It is a sociopolitical request (freedom outside the supervision of the Egyptians)

#### **Response:**

- flat out denial

- Pharaoh doesn't "know" who this "Yahweh" is. "Know" probably means know in the sense of recognizing his authority. Yahweh has no authority in Egypt.

It couldn't be a very impressive God if He was the God of a bunch of slave.

**Second Request:**

- more information is given. Intensity of dialogue escalates.  
- give more information about this God "The God of the Hebrews"  
- Yahweh had already been called the "God of Israel" but this wasn't a term the Egyptians knew very well. They used the more derisive term "Habiru" or "Hebrew" that highlighted the low-class oppressive nature of this people.

- this is a fleshing out of Ex. 3:18-19 (read). Notice here, God doesn't threaten the Hebrews if they don't get permission to do this. So we ask, "Did Moses make this up? When did God threaten him, if Pharaoh refused. God had threatened Pharaoh but not Moses. Perhaps Moses is squirming, crumbling under the pressure of the task and beginning to fall apart.

Or perhaps Moses is correctly thinking, the Pharaoh will indeed be concerned about the loss of the Hebrew people. Moses wants to use this potential loss as leverage in his negotiation.

**Second Response:**

- Pharaoh considers Moses a "distraction." He's taking them away from their work. That's really the only thing Pharaoh cares about – work! The economy is the only thing on his mind. We want goods and services to flow at maximum output. Anything that threatens to slow that down is a threat to his power, his kingdom, his world.

- What is Pharaoh's argument? Economics. His concern is the undermining of cheap, hard-working labor.

**App:** Is that the only thing we're concerned about? The economy? What about our moral values? What about our relationship with God? What about how we treat other people, especially the voiceless cries of the poor? Isn't our world and each election we participate in more than who is going to put the most money in my pocket? Greatness in a nation or person doesn't come primarily from the economy. It comes from a climate of justice, fairness, relationships with people and with God.

**Pharaoh's Decree:**

- must make the same number of bricks with "stubble" that they gather on their own rather than straw provided by the Egyptians.

- Pharaoh accuses the Hebrews of laziness. He contends this is what's behind all this religious stuff. He calls these words of Moses "lies." Moses is an agitator. The slaves aren't calling for this sacrifice. Moses is making it all up.

- some have come to believe the Hebrews were forced to make bricks w/o the essential "straw." They didn't. Now, they had to gather their own "straw/stubble"

### **Organized Oppression (vv 10-14)**

- Egyptian taskmasters talk to the Hebrew people.
- The Hebrew people can't produce the quotas being demanded.
- The Hebrew supervisors were beaten.

### **People in Bureaucracy:**

#### **Egypt**

Pharaoh

Egyptian task masters

#### **Hebrews**

Moses and Aaron

Hebrew supervisors

Hebrew slaves

## **II. Second Confrontation with Pharaoh: Hebrew supervisors and Pharaoh (5:15-6:1)**

- Moses had failed
- therefore, the Hebrew slave supervisors are going to take charge
- some people get bogged down in how a group of Hebrew slave foremen ever could have access to the Pharaoh. The question misses the point of the text. The text is presenting to us an unreasonable, hard-hearted Pharaoh in order to reveal the power of this God of the Hebrew slaves.
- Hebrew slave masters are laying the blame at the feet of Pharaoh and his slave masters. It's not their fault. This is totally unreasonable.

We can see Moses isn't the only one confronting Pharaoh. Moses isn't the only courageous voice. This was risky business for these slave supervisors to come before the royal court and basically tell Pharaoh, he has "violated/sinned against" his own people. They are taking their own lives into their hands.

### **Pharaoh's response: (v 17-18)**

- Lazy, Lazy. Again, Pharaoh blames the whole problem on their laziness. Did he

know better. Of course he did. They were making the quotas fine as long as they had access to the right materials. Only now can they not meet the quota. We are getting a glimpse of the brutality and hard-heartedness of Pharaoh.

### **Hebrews slave masters and Moses: (v 20-21)**

- Moses was waiting on them, as if he knew what was going on.
- Reveals that Moses was delegating or sloughing off on his responsibility. God told Moses to go to Pharaoh, not the Hebrew slavemasters. But Moses is desperate and scared. Who could blame him?
- The slavemasters have changed. They no longer are blaming Pharaoh, they are blaming Moses. Forget that it is Pharaoh that is the oppressor. Forget that it is Pharaoh that has the power. Forget that it is the Pharaoh who is the causes of their lashes. The slavemasters are blaming the one who exposed the problem rather than the one who caused the problems. Moses is the agitator. The rabble-rouser. The one who is stirring up trouble. Why doesn't he just leave well enough alone.

**App:** the perennial problem whistle-blowers face. You always get blamed for the problem, because most people don't want to face the problems. They don't want to go through the pain and suffering necessary to deal with the source of the problem. Therefore they blame, criticize, and condemn those who "rock the boat." People who oppose injustice and stand up to evil are often condemned and crucified, not by the evil ones, but by all those who wanted to put their head in the sand. "Can't we just all get along?"

### **Moses blames Yahweh (v 22)**

- Moses deflects the blame from himself to Yahweh
- Yahweh is the one who has caused this "trouble/evil" (Hebrew word is *ra* )
- Moses deflects the plural blame (Moses and Aaron) to singular blame (Yahweh)

**App:** When things get beyond our control we blame God don't we. The evil perpetrated by others is laid at the foot of God. Is that legitimate complaint? Doesn't God have ultimate control of the world? If evil is in the world, isn't it God's fault since he could wipe out evil if He wanted to.

You see, this isn't just a angry tirade Moses is spewing. He is making a fundamental claim about the world God has created. Injustice, oppression, brutality, rape, pillage are happening. And God you created this so it's your fault.

- See, I told you so!!!!

\* You are mistreating your own people Yahweh

\* Why did you send me? Don't you see that was a mistake?

\* Pharaoh has brought trouble. Things aren't better they're worse.

\* AND !!!! You haven't done a thing. You haven't delivered your people.  
Things are worse.

### **Conclusion**

- this ends badly

- evil has increased. Suffering has increased. The hand of God is, at this point, nowhere to be seen.

- and yet, what we're seeing is the necessary ingredients to revolutions. Revolutions don't happen until 2 things happen:

1) the oppressive regime digs in their heels, and raises the bar of repression

2) the oppressed get to the point where their lives are so bad they are willing to risk all for the possibility of a better future.

Perhaps this is what it means when it talks about God hardening Pharaoh's heart. God is bringing Pharaoh and the slaves to the point where violence, plagues, revolution will blow up. That is the way revolutions happen in the real world. This is the real world. These are real people. Pharaoh had real power. Liberation is slow, hard work. Moses is impatient because he wants it now. But God knows the value of time and allowing people to come to the point where they can and will act for the cause of justice, freedom, and a better world.

### **Confrontation with Pharaoh**

**Exodus 5:1-6:1**

#### **Review of Chapter 4**

1) God provides a staff (power)

2) God provides Aaron (words)

\* Moses return to Egypt (the ultimate test)

## I. First Confrontation with Pharaoh: Moses and Aaron (5:1-14)

- A. Moses' request
- B. Pharaoh's response
- C. Moses' second request
- D. Pharaoh's second response
- E. Pharaoh's decree

### Power Structure

Pharaoh

Egyptian taskmasters

Moses/Yahweh

Hebrew supervisors

Hebrew slaves

## II. Second Confrontation with Pharaoh: Hebrew supervisors (5:15-6:1)

- A. Supervisors question and attack
- B. Pharaoh's response
- C. Supervisors attack of Moses
- D. Moses blames Yahweh

### The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

**Introduction:** How are we to determine who was responsible for Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to let the Hebrews go free? On the one hand, we are told that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart. Other passages report that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Still others simply describe Pharaoh's heart as being hardened without designating the cause of the hardness. This dilemma has perplexed Jewish scholars for 1000s of years and Christian scholars for as long as theology has been taught. The potential problem is clear. Would God cause someone to do evil, and then punish him for doing evil? Would this violate the nature of the justice of God?

Of course, what we have here in a compelling narrative is an illustration of the tension inherent within the Bible itself. The Bible presents two very important doctrines in multiple ways. It takes careful reading of all the Bible to develop an adequate understanding of the nature of God and the nature of man. What we have in this particular narrative is an illustration of great mystery of the tension between divine sovereignty and human freedom. Both are supported through the course of Scripture. Interpretation of Scripture is very difficult on many doctrines. That's why there are so many denominations and even within each denomination that are constant struggles about which interpretation is correct.

### **Divine Sovereignty vs. Human Freedom**

**Divine Sovereignty** is the belief that God reigns supreme, that God is ultimately in control of the world. God is all powerful and can do anything God wants to do. He may or may not do things that satisfy our limited understanding of justice and righteousness.

**Human Freedom** is the belief that man has been created with a free will, with the ability to choose between good and evil. Man therefore is responsible for his decisions. He is no puppet. His decisions have consequences.

There are some who believe that allowing for human freedom impinges on the sovereignty of God. They believe if you grant that mankind can choose to obey or disobey based on their own free will, you are allowing them to control their destiny. Only God controls the destiny of man.

Most traditional Baptists however see it like this. They agree that God is sovereign, that God is ultimately in control of the world and everything within it. But traditional Baptists (along with most Jews, and many other Xtn groups) believe that God, in His sovereignty, decided/predestined/predetermined that He would give mankind free will. Human freedom is real. It is always freedom given by a sovereign God and therefore it is under the power and control of God. If you were to ask me which is most important—Divine Sovereignty or Human Freedom—I would quickly respond divine sovereignty of course. But, human freedom has been woven into the fabric of creation by a sovereign God who loves everyone, even Pharaoh. In order to demonstrate that love, God gave Pharaoh the ability to accept or reject his commands. By rejecting the commands of God, Pharaoh set in motion, not a hardening of the arteries, but a

hardening of the heart. With each act of disobedience, Pharaoh damaged his free will and made it increasingly difficult to obey God.

**SBC:**

This great biblical mystery is carried out as a struggle, debate, controversy in churches. There have been groups that emphasized one element of this tension over the other. The first Baptists were General Baptists. They believe in a general atonement. They believe that Jesus died for all people. "For God so loved the world."

A generation later, another kind of Baptists emerged. They were Particular Baptists. They believed in a Particular atonement. They believed that Jesus died for a particular group of people, the elect. "For God so loved the world" is interpreted that God loved everybody, but he had predestined from the dawn of creation some for damnation, others for eternal life.

Now the the moderate-Fundamentalist controversy is over in the SBC. The Fundamentalists won hands down and are completely in the control. We have a new SBC, based not on cooperation for purposes of evangelism and missions, but the SBC is not based on doctrinal uniformity. The doctrinal uniformity is spelled out in the new BFM.

The big debate and controversy already emerging in the new SBC is the ancient one of general vs. particular atonement. Calvinism vs. Arminianism. Free will vs. Divine Sovereignty. This controversy is being played out in churches across the South. Most churches don't learn about it, before it has come through like a tornado, and completely altered the church from a GB to a PB.

Listen to an introductory story in Fisher Humphrey's book "For God so Loved the World."

Fisher received an unusual long distance telephone call. The caller was a stranger who said that he preferred not to identify himself or his hometown or his church. This is the story he told.

"I have been a member of a Baptist church in my hometown since I was born. I grew up in this church, and I was married here. I had hoped to remain here all my life.

But now I have a problem. A number of months ago our church called a new pastor. I was on the pastor search committee, and I was enthusiastic about the young man we called.

But after he had been here for a while I noticed that his preaching seemed different from what we were accustomed to. Sometimes he seemed to be saying that God doesn't love everyone in the world, only Christians.

Several of us asked him about this, and he agreed to meet with us and discuss it. During the meeting he told us that he is committed to Calvinism. We talked about many things during the meeting. My concern was with whether he believes that God loves all people. He said he believes that God does not love all people, only Christians, or, as he put it, 'the elect.'

"Dr. Humphreys," the caller said, "I am very upset about this. I have never heard anything like this in my life. What is Calvinism? What does the Bible say about it? Are Baptists supposed to be Calvinists? If so, nobody ever told me anything about it."

Then he added with deep sadness, "I have decided that my family and I must leave our church. I hate to do this more than I can tell you, but I don't feel that I have a choice; I don't want my children to grow up hearing sermons that say that God does not love all the people in the world."

What does all this have to do with "the hardening of Pharaoh's heart"? Well, how biblical interpreters answer this question is quite dependent on their presuppositions about free will and divine sovereignty before they get to this text. Granted, this is tough issue and many thoughtful, reasonable, and deeply committed Christians and Jews differ on this interpretation. So we hope to proceed with caution, discernment, and fidelity to our deeply rooted understanding of who God is, and what kind of God do we worship and serve.

### **Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart?**

#### **God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart** (9 instances)

Text	Quotation	Setting
4:21	"I will harden his heart"	God predicting what He will do. Instruction time w/ Moses
7:3	"I will harden P's heart"	Just before the 1 <sup>st</sup> plague (blood)

- 9:12 “the Lord hardened P’s heart” After the 6<sup>th</sup> plague (boils)
- 10:1 “I have hardened his heart” Just before the 8<sup>th</sup> plague (locusts)
- 10:20 “the Lord hardened P’s heart” After the 8<sup>th</sup> plague (locusts)
- 10:27 “the Lord hardened P’s heart” After the 9<sup>th</sup> plague (darkness)
- 11:10 “the Lord hardened P’s heart” After the 10<sup>th</sup> plague (first born son)
- 14:4 “I will harden P’s heart” Instructions to Moses before the miracle at the Red Sea
- 14:8 “the Lord hardened P’s heart” Description of why P was pursuing the Israelites

### Pharaoh Harden’s His Own Heart (9 instances)

Text	Quotation	Setting
7:13	“Pharaoh’s heart became hard”	prior to the 1 <sup>st</sup> plague (blood)
7:14	“Pharaoh’s heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.”	prior to 1 <sup>st</sup> plague
7:22	“P’s heart became hard”	after the 1 <sup>st</sup> plague (blood)
8:15	“he [Pharaoh] hardened his heart”	after the 2 <sup>nd</sup> plague (frogs)
8:19	“P’s heart was hard.”	after the 3 <sup>rd</sup> plague (gnats)
8:32	“P hardened his heart”	after the 4 <sup>th</sup> plague (flies)
9:7	“his heart was unyielding”	after the 5 <sup>th</sup> plague (livestock)
9:34	“he and his officials hardened their hearts”	after the 7 <sup>th</sup> plague
9:35	“P’s heart was hard”	after the 7 <sup>th</sup> plague

The story of the wearing down of Pharaoh's resistance is told as if it were a complicated piece of oriental bargaining. In the beginning Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the changing of Aaron's rod into a serpent, the changing of water into blood, and the multiplication of the frogs. After the **second plague**, Pharaoh proposed a slight compromise by offering to let the Hebrews offer sacrifices to their God, but as soon as he received relief from the frogs, he hardened his heart again (8:8 and 8:15).

**After the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague** the magicians and religious leaders of Egypt agreed that this was the work of a god, and not mere magic. Still Pharaoh’s heart was hard (8:19).

**After the 4<sup>th</sup> plague**, Pharaoh then proposed that the Israelites go only a short distance outside the land of Egypt to offer their sacrifices. Again, when the flies left, Pharaoh hardened his heart and wouldn't let the people go.

**After the seventh plague**, Pharaoh confessed that he had sinned (9:27) and offered to let the Hebrews go, only to harden his heart immediately afterwards. He then tried to negotiate another compromise with Moses; he would agree to let the men go if they would leave their wives and children behind. Moses again refused the compromise.

**After the plague of darkness (#9)**, Pharaoh made a final attempt to effect a compromise. He offered to let the Hebrews depart if they would leave their flocks and herds behind (9:24). Again Moses refused to compromise, although it required the plague of death on all the firstborns of the land of Egypt to finally convince Pharaoh of the futility of further resistance. Even then, Pharaoh's heart would grow hard and he would pursue the Israelites into the Red Sea.

### **Who is responsible for Pharaoh's hard heart?**

#### **1) The multiple texts demonstrate that both God and Pharaoh are responsible.**

- looking chronologically we see the following:

**a. God knew this was going to happen.** He knew ahead of time. (4:21) God also took credit for hardening Pharaoh's heart. He said this before he sent Moses and just before the first plague.

**b. Pharaoh is described as hardening his own heart** in several instances.

It's interesting to note the times the text speaks about "Pharaoh hardening his heart" is in the early plagues (after 1-5, 7). Only later (after 6,8-10) are we told the Lord hardened his heart.

#### **2) Pharaoh's unyielding spirit created a vicious, inexorable cycle toward hard-heartedness that made it increasingly difficult for him to repent/change.**

- the more Pharaoh resisted Moses/God, the harder his heart became

- he initiated the resistance to God/Moses because of his pride, his will to power, and his own selfish instincts. Considering himself a god, he resented anyone or any God stepping on his turf. He controlled Egypt and wanted no one else to control it.

- the NT speaks of this vicious cycle in Rom 1

Rom 1:18-21                      they knew God but refused to glorify God  
   therefore their “thinking became futile”  
   “their foolish hearts were darkened”

Rom 1:22-24                      “God gave them up”

God’s sovereignty, God’s control. God let them have what they foolishly desired—human sovereignty. They wanted control of their lives, they refused to bow down to God, so God allowed them to go down that path to destruction.

“The Torah teaches us not that we humans ultimately have no ability to choose freely and thus have no liability for our actions. But rather that we are fully responsible for our actions and will be judged accordingly, and that repeated actions yield consequences, create habits and dispositions, and these may indeed hinder our ability to choose freely and wisely. Free will is not an unrestricted and immutable gift.”

Rabbi Daniel Alexander

During my college years—in my infinite wisdom—it occurred to me that it made no sense to stop at red traffic lights when there was clearly no traffic around. So I began to stop only briefly—just long enough to check for cars—and then proceed. My stops became shorter and shorter, and eventually I no longer stopped at all. I simply checked out the landscape well in advance and—if no cars were coming—proceeded full speed through the red light.

One day something changed all of that, and I've never run a red light since. I was approaching an isolated light in an area where there was rarely traffic in the busiest of times. I had already

checked out the landscape and was near the empty intersection when a car topped the hill to my left. It was too far away to pose any threat, but it did pose a problem: it was a police car. But that is not what changed my ways, because I got the car stopped and received no more punishment than a dirty glance.

What scared me enough to put an end to that practice was what occurred in the split seconds between spotting the patrol car and getting the car stopped. In that instant, my foot moved from the gas pedal to the brake pedal, and then *back* to the gas pedal! I did not will it to do that; my foot just did it. My foot did that because that is how I had trained my mind to respond. I had continually ignored what had once been a clear signal to stop—a red light—and as a result that signal was no longer clear.

The same occurs with sin. Our God-given conscience gives us warning signals, and we can heed those signals or ignore them. If we ignore them often enough, we may eventually fail to recognize them as signals at all.

*Citation:* J. Douglas Burford, Mission, Kansas

### **3) God's sovereignty is revealed through his ability to take evil (the misuse of human freedom) and use it for his ultimate purposes.**

- God used Pharaoh (his evil) for God's purposes. This doesn't mean that God's sole purpose in creating Pharaoh was for Pharaoh to do evil. God wanted Pharaoh to repent. God always wants the wicked to repent (Jer 3:22, Ezek 18:21 esp., Mt 23:37)

- Nevertheless, since Pharaoh hardened his heart against God (something God knew he would do), he set himself up as an adversary to God. God not only would prevail over Pharaoh, Pharaoh's resistance to God would aid God in his ultimate purpose. The ultimate purpose of God was to free and redeem the Hebrew slaves. He had chosen them to be his special people, to be a light for the Gentiles. Pharaoh, the one who was oppressing them and causing them great pain, would eventually become the one who would "drive" them out of Egypt.

This nation would carry the law of God in their hearts. They would become a light to

all the other nations, showing the other nations who the true God was. Ultimately, thru this nation, a son would be born who would become the Savior of the world. Thru Jesus all the world could know of God's love and the great lengths he would go to forgive their sin and offer them a joyful life and the promise of eternal life.

- this is the meaning of Rom 9:17-21. God is sovereign. He has power over everything. Even the evil of Pharaoh will be used for God's purposes. There is nothing outside the control of God. Still, it was the sovereign will and choice of God to give Pharaoh freedom to resist or submit. In choosing to resist, Pharaoh opposed the will of God, but even that opposition was used by God for his glory. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by creating the conditions by which Pharaoh's heart could become hard. God made the spiritual laws of the universe. By creating the conditions for Pharaoh to submit or resist, God was the ultimate reason Pharaoh's heart became hard. Yet, when this happened, God used it for the purposes of his glory and his purposes of blessing the world.

### **Conclusion**

This "hardening of Pharaoh's heart" is an illustration of the tension b/w human freedom and divine sovereignty. Although God is sovereign, his sovereignty has created a spiritual system that makes us responsible moral agents. Our failure is our fault, not God's; except to the extent that it is God who made the rules. We are playing a very dangerous game when we continually reject and resist God. The more we resist, the easier it becomes to resist. Each of us should take a serious look at our lives, exposing them before a holy God, asking him where we are falling short of his glory. Confession and repentance should follow. Advent is the perfect time to do that. We have the moral ability to live by God's law or live in opposition to God's law. God's purposes will be fulfilled either way. But if we abide by his laws, we will share in his glory instead of being consumed by his glory.

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9:35 "P's heart was hard" after the 7<sup>th</sup> plague

The story of the wearing down of Pharaoh's resistance is told as if it were a complicated piece of oriental bargaining. In the beginning Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the changing of Aaron's rod into a serpent, the changing of water into blood, and the multiplication of the frogs. After the **second plague**, Pharaoh proposed a slight compromise by offering to let the Hebrews offer sacrifices to their God, but as soon as he received relief from the frogs, he hardened his heart again (8:8 and 8:15).

**After the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague** the magicians and religious leaders of Egypt agreed that this was the work of a god, and not mere magic. Still Pharaoh's heart was hard (8:19).

**After the 4<sup>th</sup> plague**, Pharaoh then proposed that the Israelites go only a short distance outside the land of Egypt to offer their sacrifices. Again, when the flies left, Pharaoh hardened his heart and wouldn't let the people go.

**After the seventh plague**, Pharaoh confessed that he had sinned (9:27) and offered to let the Hebrews go, only to harden his heart immediately afterwards. He then tried to negotiate another compromise with Moses; he would agree to let the men go if they would leave their wives and children behind. Moses again refused the compromise.

**After the plague of darkness (#9)**, Pharaoh made a final attempt to effect a compromise. He offered to let the Hebrews depart if they would leave their flocks and herds behind (9:24). Again Moses refused to compromise, although it required the plague of death on all the firstborns of the land of Egypt to finally convince Pharaoh of the futility of further resistance. Even then, Pharaoh's heart would grow hard and he would pursue the Israelites into the Red Sea.

### **Who is responsible for Pharaoh's hard heart?**

#### **1) The multiple texts demonstrate that both God and Pharaoh are responsible.**

- looking chronologically we see the following:

- a. God knew this was going to happen.** He knew ahead of time. (4:21) God also took credit for hardening Pharaoh's heart. He said this before he sent Moses and just before the first plague.

**b. Pharaoh is described as hardening his own heart** in several instances.

It's interesting to note the times the text speaks about "Pharaoh hardening his heart" is in the early plagues (after 1-5, 7). Only later (after 6,8-10) are we told the Lord hardened his heart.

**2) Pharaoh's unyielding spirit created a vicious, inexorable cycle toward hard-heartedness that made it increasingly difficult for him to repent/change.**

- the more Pharaoh resisted Moses/God, the harder his heart became
- he initiated the resistance to God/Moses because of his pride, his will to power, and his own selfish instincts. Considering himself a god, he resented anyone or any God stepping on his turf. He controlled Egypt and wanted no one else to control it.

- the NT speaks of this vicious cycle in Rom 1

Rom 1:18-21            they knew God but refused to glorify God  
   therefore their "thinking became futile"  
   "their foolish hearts were darkened"

Rom 1:22-24            "God gave them up"

God's sovereignty, God's control. God let them have what they foolishly desired—human sovereignty. They wanted control of their lives, they refused to bow down to God, so God allowed them to go down that path to destruction.

"The Torah teaches us not that we humans ultimately have no ability to choose freely and thus have no liability for our actions. But rather that we are fully responsible for our actions and will be judged accordingly, and that repeated actions yield consequences, create habits and dispositions, and these may indeed hinder our ability to choose freely and wisely. Free will is not an unrestricted and immutable gift."

Rabbi Daniel Alexander

During my college years— in my infinite wisdom— it occurred to me that it made no sense to stop at red traffic lights when there was clearly no traffic around. So I began to stop only briefly— just long enough to check for cars— and then proceed. My stops became shorter and shorter, and eventually I no longer stopped at all. I simply checked out the landscape well in advance and— if no cars were coming— proceeded full speed through the red light.

One day something changed all of that, and I've never run a red light since. I was approaching an isolated light in an area where there was rarely traffic in the busiest of times. I had already checked out the landscape and was near the empty intersection when a car topped the hill to my left. It was too far away to pose any threat, but it did pose a problem: it was a police car. But that is not what changed my ways, because I got the car stopped and received no more punishment than a dirty glance.

What scared me enough to put an end to that practice was what occurred in the split seconds between spotting the patrol car and getting the car stopped. In that instant, my foot moved from the gas pedal to the brake pedal, and then *back* to the gas pedal! I did not will it to do that; my foot just did it. My foot did that because that is how I had trained my mind to respond. I had continually ignored what had once been a clear signal to stop— a red light— and as a result that signal was no longer clear.

The same occurs with sin. Our God-given conscience gives us warning signals, and we can heed those signals or ignore them. If we ignore them often enough, we may eventually fail to recognize them as signals at all.

*Citation:* J. Douglas Burford, Mission, Kansas

### **3) God's sovereignty is revealed through his ability to take evil (the misuse of human freedom) and use it for his ultimate purposes.**

- God used Pharaoh (his evil) for God's purposes. This doesn't mean that God's sole purpose in creating Pharaoh was for Pharaoh to do evil. God wanted Pharaoh to repent. God always wants the wicked to repent (Jer 3:22, Ezek 18:21 esp., Mt 23:37)

- Nevertheless, since Pharaoh hardened his heart against God (something God knew he would do), he set himself up as an adversary to God. God not only would prevail over Pharaoh, Pharaoh's resistance to God would aid God in his ultimate purpose. The ultimate purpose of God was to free and redeem the Hebrew slaves. He had

chosen them to be his special people, to be a light for the Gentiles. Pharaoh, the one who was oppressing them and causing them great pain, would eventually become the one who would “drive” them out of Egypt.

This nation would carry the law of God in their hearts. They would become a light to all the other nations, showing the other nations who the true God was. Ultimately, through this nation, a son would be born who would become the Savior of the world. Through Jesus all the world could know of God’s love and the great lengths he would go to forgive their sin and offer them a joyful life and the promise of eternal life.

- this is the meaning of Rom 9:17-21. God is sovereign. He has power over everything. Even the evil of Pharaoh will be used for God’s purposes. There is nothing outside the control of God. Still, it was the sovereign will and choice of God to give Pharaoh freedom to resist or submit. In choosing to resist, Pharaoh opposed the will of God, but even that opposition was used by God for his glory. God hardened Pharaoh’s heart by creating the conditions by which Pharaoh’s heart could become hard. God made the spiritual laws of the universe. By creating the conditions for Pharaoh to submit or resist, God was the ultimate reason Pharaoh’s heart became hard. Yet, when this happened, God used it for the purposes of his glory and his purposes of blessing the world.

### **Conclusion**

This “hardening of Pharaoh’s heart” is an illustration of the tension b/w human freedom and divine sovereignty. Although God is sovereign, his sovereignty has created a spiritual system that makes us responsible moral agents. Our failure is our fault, not God’s; except to the extent that it is God who made the rules. We are playing a very dangerous game when we continually reject and resist God. The more we resist, the easier it becomes to resist. Each of us should take a serious look at our lives, exposing them before a holy God, asking him where we are falling short of his glory. Confession and repentance should follow. Advent is the perfect time to do that. We have the moral ability to live by God’s law or live in opposition to

God's law. God's purposes will be fulfilled either way. But if we abide by his laws, we will share in his glory instead of being consumed by his glory.

## **The Exodus**

### **Exodus 12:31-51**

(Read Text)

#### **What is the most important Bible verse?**

Gen 1:1 "In the beginning God...."

- the beginning, starts with God, the creation

Gen 17:7 "I will establish my covenant...."

- the covenant God made with Abraham and the people of God

Gen 3:6 "...she took some of it and ate it."

- the first sin of humankind. The road of separation and enmity b/w God and man.

Psalms 23:4 "Yea though I walk through the valley..."

- word of comfort for those facing the ultimate enemy—death.

Isaiah 53:4 "Surely he took our infirmities..."

- prophetic words about the Messiah as the Suffering Servant

Psalms 100:3 "...Know that the LORD is God."

- psalm of praise, acknowledge that the LORD is God

#### **Why Exodus 12:51 is the most important verse in the Old Testament**

##### **1. Creation was for God's people.**

- No where are we told explicitly "why" God created the world. God didn't "need" anything. Yet it was in God's nature to create and to love. Therefore he created a people, made in his image to love. But Adam and Eve sinned, and nations subsequently formed in order to control land, resources, and culture. Even at creation, the idea of a people of God, a people for God was a work.

##### **2. God's promise to Abraham.**

Gen 17:7-8

##### **3. Birthday of the nation of Israel.**

- One attribute of nationhood is freedom to govern itself. On that day Israel left Egypt and became free to govern themselves. In a few days they would come to Sinai and God would give them Law to govern themselves by.

- the taking of the promised land is a result of their exodus (Josh and Judges will follow)
- the kingdom of Israel found their beginning in that exodus (Sam, Kgs, Chrn)
- wisdom literature is directed to the people of God
- the Major and Minor prophets all call Israel to be faithful to the God of the exodus and for other nations to know that He is God. Need to remember the exodus and be faithful in serving him.

#### **4. Prophetic introduction of who Christ is and what he does.**

- John 3:16

“For God so loved Israel that he sent his deliverer Moses, so that whoever might follow him, might not remain in a slave, but enter the promised land and therein dwell forever.”

- Moses delivered as a servant. Christ delivered as a Son. (Heb 3:5)

#### **5. Parallels the Christian’s salvation experience.**

- a. Historical event
- b. God is the author of salvation
- c. We are saved from bondage
- d. “Human agents” are involved in deliverance

### **The Exodus**

#### **I. Pharaoh gives in. (vv 31-32)**

- though he had sworn (10:28) not to see Moses again, Pharaoh must give in to a God determined to free his people.
- this is an unconditional surrender. Pharaoh is no longer stalling and bargaining.
- no longer does Pharaoh taunt or mimic Moses. He humbly asks for Yahweh’s blessing. i.e “Please take this curse away from me.”

#### **II. Egyptians favor/support the exodus (vv 33-36)**

- this final plague affected every single family
- the Egyptians rightly saw that if the Israelites stayed, they were all in jeopardy of death!
- “dough narrative.” What’s the big deal?!!

From now on, unleavened bread would be used to:

- 1) Show the haste in which the Israelites left Egypt
- 2) Serve almost as a sacrament, to give a physical reminder of God's activity in the nation's history.

- booty, that the Egyptians could be "picked clean" without as much as a fight, is another testimony to the power of God in the exodus narrative. The exodus is a gift that they could not earn. This booty is a gift which they could not seize. It comes completely from God. There is nothing about which to boast, except for the power of God.

### **III. Logistics of the exodus (vv 37-42).**

- 600,000 is a round number for 603,550 (cf 38:26, Num 1:46)
- probably 2 million leaving Egypt.
- v 38 "many other people", refers to the "rabble" (cf Num 11:4), those non-Israelite people who left Egypt with the Israelites. People discontented w/ Pharaoh and his policies, or perhaps people who had a conversion to the God of Israel. Perhaps they were non-semitic slaves. Many of these people would cause disruptions later on.

### **IV. Passover instructions (vv 43-49)**

- only members of the covenant community are eligible for Passover ritual.
- physical circumcision is the requirement for all ritual participants

### **V. The Exodus (vv 50-51)**

- the great event predicted by Yahweh, planned and prepared by Yahweh, and anticipated by the Israelites finally takes place. God acts. He doesn't just predict or promise or plan or prepare. God acts. He intrudes in history to effect radical change according to his perfect will.

**The Exodus**  
**Exodus 12:31-51**

1. Begin by reading text.

2. Discussion questions

- a. After 10 plagues Pharaoh finally and unconditionally gives in to the demands of God and Moses to let the people go. Why do you think he finally gave in?
- b. It's interesting that following the Pharaoh's demands for the Israelites to leave he also asks Moses to bless him. What does this say about Pharaoh's view of Moses and Yahweh?
- c. On that night, how would you have felt if you were an regular Egyptian?
- d. Verse 38 says "many other people" left with the Israelites, meaning non-Israelites were a part of the exodus? Who do you think these people were? Why were they leaving with the Israelites? Perhaps more importantly, what do you think the future ramifications of this would be? (Cf Num 11:4)
- e. What were the requirements to participate in Passover? What do you think was the significance of these requirements?
- f. Some people have said the "exodus" in the Old Testament is similar to the "crucifixion" in the New Testament, because in the crucifixion people are released from their bondage in sin. How does the "exodus" parallel or how is it similar to your salvation experience?

Possible answers: it's based on an historical event;

God was the author of the exodus and my salvation;

Both were saved from bondage;

"Human agents" were involved in both.

g. Who were the “human agents” involved in your salvation experience? How did God use them to redeem you?

h. What do you do, can you do to give proper remembrance to your salvation experience through Jesus Christ?

### **Exodus in the New Testament**

#### **Exodus in the OT**

- Exodus in the OT is comparable to the gospels in the NT
- focus of Exodus is the historic event which led to the redemption and creation of God’s people.
- Israel’s escape from slavery, escape at the Red Sea, and their resultant establishment as God’s people is integral to the entire OT. There would be no OT without Exodus
- These key events are the keys to meaning for all Israelite existence. In fact, we would be hard pressed to find any OT passage that doesn’t relate to Exodus.
- In Exodus, Yahweh’s power has been revealed in defeating the Egyptians, and his Presence has been revealed in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai, and throughout the wilderness.
- the rest of the OT is a narrative of this chosen’s people’s faithfulness and disobedience to this all powerful, ever-present God.
- Some examples are more obvious than others

- \* Ps. 106:7-8                    salvation at the Red Sea
- \* Ps 78:41-43,52-53            listing of the plagues against Egypt
- \* Jer 31:31                        a new covenant written on the heart
- \* Prov. 1:7                         fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The Israelites were taught to fear God and learn from him, but not to overstep their bounds with him.
- \* Mal.4:4                         a call to remember the laws given to Moses

#### **Exodus in the NT**

- everywhere in the NT, the one overriding use of Exodus (the event more than the book) is the teaching that God's redemption of his people is an historical event. Thus, it teaches that God is historically active in the world. The action of God in the world is in history. Therefore, the religion of the Jews and later, Christians, is one based on history and not merely intellectual or mystic.

Hindus believe in a cyclical world, the same things happen again and again.

Buddhas live by the 8 laws of Buddha

Mystery religions of ancient Palestine were grounded in epic and mythic battles between the gods.

Judaism is grounded in the activity of God in the world. In other words, the creation of the people of Israel wasn't merely a social revolution of the proletariat throwing off the oppression of the bourgeoisie. It was not a revolution as much as it was a revelation, a revelation of God's divine will being enacted in the world. God revealed his will to redeem the Hebrew slaves. He gave them a law so they could become a people. He gave them liturgies so they could continually remember his great salvific acts. Ultimately, he would want them to be a light to the Gentiles, so all the world would know Yahweh is God, and know the ethical laws that should guide their communal living.

Jesus is an event. He is a teacher, but not just a teacher. He's a teacher who acts to save. Jesus wasn't a mystic, teaching spewing religious platitudes. He was a teacher giving a new, improved law to live by, but he was a teacher who lived and acted in history to save and create a people of God. The Jesus event – his life, death, and resurrection– is an historical event. Not just a social event, ie an event that captured the imagination of a Jewish rabbi and led him into a charismatic leadership role. Nor was it merely a political event, with the poor charismatic leader giving hope to the impoverished and oppressed masses. It was above all an event of historical revelation. It was an event in history that was demonstrating the will of God. In Jesus God was acting in the world to reveal his will and way to the world.

- he was creating a new people
- he was forgiving sin
- he was establishing a new law, the law of love
- he was providing a pathway to future and eternal communion

It is crucial to our understanding of the Xtn faith, that all of this happened, in time, in the days of Tiberius, and Quirinius, and Caesar Augustus, and King Herod.

It is these kinds of historical events that prevent our faith from being swallowed up in some mystical, nonhistorical, universal system of thought or belief. Just as Passover becomes a historical meal celebrating an historical event in order to shape and spiritually quicken a

community of faith, so the Lord's Supper is a means to shape our faith, to remind us of history (Christ's death), and the promise of future life in Christ.

Thus we worship on the Lord's Day. Every Sunday is a reminder of the resurrection. A reminder of something that happened, not just in the minds of the disciples, but in the history of the world. It is this historical revelation which drives our Xtn community of faith.

Our commission is to go into all the world to tell about this event, and the mere telling of the history creates new histories of people coming to know and serve the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Three Major uses of the themes and events of Exodus in the NT

### **1. Liberation/Deliverance**

### **Stephen's Sermon**

- the liberating event is the entire process of the people crying out to God, and God acting on their behalf. He heard their groans

He called Moses to be their leader

He gave Moses words and courage to confront Pharaoh

He demonstrated his power through plagues, wonders, and miracles

He opened the Red Sea

He provided manna and quail

All of this rescued the people from bondage

Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:1-53 uses the Moses life and deliverance as the center piece for his sermon (the longest sermon in the NT or OT). Total of 28 verses. Impressive in its historical detail. Summarizes the history of Israel to demonstrate how Israel again and again has paid no attention to its prophets and killed them so they would not be confronted with their sins.

Stephen devotes 2 verses to David

- Abraham 8 verses

- Joseph 10 verses

- Moses and Exodus receive 25 verses

- The question is Why?. The answer: Because all the history of Israel centers on the activity of God to create the Israelites from a group of slaves. Sure, the promises made to Abraham are important. They are beginning to be kept in Abraham's life. But in the Exodus, the promises find historical and substantial fact. Only after the Exodus is there a nation of Israel.

Heb 11:23-29 also reiterates the history of Moses

- notice prior to Stephen's sermon he is accused of speaking blasphemy against "Moses and God." Did you know you could speak blasphemy against a human being?

What we have here is such a close identification of Moses w/ Israel that to speak words that threaten the identity of Israel was to speak blasphemy against Moses. It was nationalism at its unhealthy extreme. Stephen's sermon about Christ threatened the religious leaders' understanding of who they were. They responded with vengeance and cruelty. All of this points to the fact that Israel looked at itself in terms of descendants of Moses, the deliverer of the people.

- notice how Stephen concluded his sermon, an allusion to the way God characterized the early Israelites: "stiff-necked people" (7:51). Echoes back to Ex. 32:9 when God saw how the Israelites produced their own golden calf when Moses had been away for a long time.

## **2. Covenant**

## **New Covenant**

Covenant is a major theme in Exodus. Two covenants are established, or perhaps, the first covenant is reestablished after it had been broken by the Israelites. The covenant was, in its simplest form a sacred promise that spiritually connected God to the people of Israel. He would be their God and they would be his people. He would always be with them and they would always obey him. They were his special people and He was their only God.

Jesus established a new covenant on the night before he was crucified. Upon taking the cup of the Passover meal that evening he said "This is my blood of the covenant." (Mt 26:27, Mk 14:24). Luke's Gospel phrases it differently, "This cup is the new covenant."

Like the OT this covenant was initiated and inaugurated by God.

Like the OT this covenant was consecrated by the shedding of blood.

2 Cor 3:6 records Paul affirming the superiority of the new covenant.

Why? B/c the new covenant is of the "spirit" as opposed to the "letter."

This foreshadows a more detailed and engaging argument about the superiority of the new covenant in Heb 7-10.

- Jesus was a superior priest who didn't need to offer sacrifices for his own sins

(7:26)

- the covenant is superior b/c it's written on hearts and minds instead of stone

(8:7, 10)

- Jesus' covenantal act is once and for all. He doesn't have to do this every year (9:25-26).

- Xtns don't dismiss the old covenant. They just believe they have a superior priest in Jesus Christ who has offered a superior sacrifice, and established a covenant that is written on the heart of man, rather than simply giving him another set of rules to live by.

As God's people we are driven by a love enacted out in the life of Christ, which compels us to love God and one another, and to love our neighbor.

### **3. Presence**

### **Power of the Holy Spirit**

The central theme in the book of Exodus that includes Deliverance and Covenant is the Presence of Yahweh. The theme of the Lord's presence with and among his people is like a magnet in Exodus that draws everything together.

- Revelation to Moses at the burning bush establishes God's presence w/ Moses
- That same experience reminds Moses that God has been with the people throughout their time of groaning
- The presence will go with Moses as he faces Pharaoh
- Yahweh's presence is manifest on the mountain in the giving of Law, so the people will have his perpetual guidance when they arrive in the promised land
- God's presence in the cloud and fire in the wilderness remind them he is always nearby
- And as we saw last week, the tabernacle becomes a kind of dwelling place for this omnipresent God in the midst of a particular people. The moving and mobile tabernacle illustrates God's mobility among and before the Israelites all the time.

#### **John 1**

- In a sense, the presence of God is captured in the life of Jesus Christ. His very name Immanuel, means "God with us."

- John's prologue continues the theme of presence by proclaiming that God dwelt among the people. That's not astonishing. The OT made that claim, precisely because God revealed himself as dwelling with them in the tabernacle.

The extension, or superior part of this is the fact that "the Word became flesh." The incarnation is the surprise, the great divide among us and Mosaic Jews. John's proclamation is that the tabernacle now, not only contains the Presence of God, but the tabernacle is actually made flesh through the body and humanity of a person called Jesus of Nazareth, whose mother was Mary and whose father was Joseph.

## **John 14**

- This Jesus who is present and lives and walks and talks with the disciples so that they see him and touch him and smell him promises always to be present with them.

- 14:15-17 is the promise of the Holy Spirit, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity. The promise is that the spirit will be with them and in them.

## **Mat. 28:20**

- the last words Jesus spoke before ascending to heaven as recorded in Matt. are words of promised presence. "And lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

Rev 22- and yet, like the OT presence of God leaves something not quite complete, so the NT Presence of Jesus and the coming of the HS also don't complete all that is to be. For the Bible ends with the words of Jesus, "Yes, I am coming soon." It is the promise of his second coming. He is present with us always, but he is also coming again. Both Jews and Christians are awaiting the coming of the Messiah. We happen to believe it is his second coming, and they believe it will be his first. But in both cases there has been a promise and a reality that God has been present with his people. For the Jews it was symbolized through the Passover meal, reminding them how the Present Yahweh protected his people from the angel of death. For Xtns it is symbolized through the Lord's Supper, but carried with us always through the promise of God's Holy Spirit. This Presence provides us with peace in the face of uncertainty and death, and power in the face of our enemies. It is the presence of God which enables us to bear witness to his great power and to actually manifest that power in our lives and the world.

