

Exodus I – Notes

VII. *Prelude to a Mess*

16-Jul-06 Exodus 5:22-7:7

Theme: God's great salvation will surely come to pass because it depends on His name and ability, rather than on human weakness and inability.

Key Verses: Exodus 6:6-8 ⁶Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD."

Review

Last week we looked at Exodus 4:18-5:21. In the second half of Exodus 4, Moses takes three steps forward. The first step was to accept the call of God in faith, returning to Egypt (4:18-23). Moses received encouragement from the Lord, knowing that the old pharaoh was dead, the new pharaoh would have his heart hardened by God to display God's power, and that Israel was God's firstborn son. The second step was to learn to obey God completely, especially in the matter of the covenant sign of circumcision (4:24-26). Moses discovered on the way to Egypt that God was not to be trifled with; He demands and expects obedience. And the third step was to be welcomed and received by his brethren, and to have them accept him and his message (4:27-31). At the end of Exodus 4, we have a beautiful picture of God's people believing His word and worshipping the Lord.

How quickly the attitude of Israel changes when faced with adversity! If Moses proceeds three steps forward at the end of chapter 4, he retreats two steps back in Exodus 5. First, Pharaoh has rejected his mission as the spokesman of God demanding the release of the Israelites. Of course, this was fully expected, but nonetheless it must have caused Moses great pain. But the second step backward was even more painful. After first being received by the Israelites, he is once again rejected by them. Moses is seen by Israel as the cause of the problem, not as the source of the cure. Still, despite the initial setbacks encountered in Exodus 5, God's plan is at last underway to redeem His people: three steps forward, two steps back.

Introduction

This morning we will be considering three loosely connected passages. The first is in Exodus 5:22-6:13 – "I Am and I Will." This passage is an answer to the prayer of Moses and another declaration of God's plan for the children of Israel. This is followed by a curious genealogy focusing on "The Sons of Levi" in Exodus 6:14-27. Finally, in case you still haven't caught on to the gist of the subject matter in the early chapters of Exodus, we have "The Plan Recited Yet Again" in Exodus 6:28-7:7.

Although we are introduced to new information in these three passages, the overarching pattern is one of repetition. We are told essentially the same thing we've already heard before in Exodus: Moses and Aaron are the chosen human leaders, but it is God who will save His people with great wonders from slavery in Egypt. Why the repetition? Why not just plunge ahead with

Exodus I – Notes

the story? Since the Bible does not waste words, there is surely significance in repeating what has already been revealed. I believe this material is preparatory for what lies ahead. These three passages in front of us today are united by the theme of preparation – they set the stage for what happens next. And what happens next will be a mess, at least from the perspective of the Egyptians. So, this is the calm before the storm, the “Prelude to a Mess.”

A. I Am and I Will (5:22-6:13)

1. Encouragement (5:22-6:1)

At the end of last week, we saw the officers of Israel blaming Moses for their troubles and petitioning the Pharaoh to relieve their suffering, although the king was the true source of their affliction. Moses is also puzzled by the setbacks, but he displays a maturity that the rest of Israel lacks. While they are complaining to Pharaoh, Moses lifts his complaint to God in prayer:

²²So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? ²³For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all” (Exodus 5:22-23).

Yes, it is true that Moses complains, but at least he is complaining to God. Some commentators (such as Enns) argue that Moses’ attitude is sinful – he is guilty of discontent, unbelief, and accusing God of failing to live up to His word. Others (e.g., Mackay) suggest that Moses’ main emotion is not bitterness but confusion. He had stepped out in faith according to God’s word, but he has not seen that word yet fulfilled. His victorious Christian life seemed to be one of failure – the more he obeyed, the worse things got.

I tend to believe that Moses is not sinning in his prayer; instead he is in the long line of prophets and men of God who lift up their voice to God and cry out: “O LORD—how long?” (*cp.* Ps. 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; Hab. 1:2). When we encounter adversity, when we face difficulties, God wants us to come to Him with our struggles. He is our refuge in times of trouble:

¹⁰The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe (Proverbs 18:10).

An indication of the appropriateness of Moses’ prayer is found in God’s answer:

¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land” (Exodus 6:1).

God could have rebuked Moses for unbelief, for doubt, or for rebellion. But He didn’t. Instead, God encouraged Moses. Moses ran to the LORD for refuge; He found it in the answer to his prayer. God’s answer to Moses should be an encouragement to us as well. Ryken puts it this way:

If God is sovereign, then we may be sure that when trouble comes, He is still in control. Whether we understand it or not, He is working to accomplish some glorious purpose. Sometimes God allows our troubles to continue in order to prove that only He can save us. The story of the exodus is a perfect example. The lesson to apply is that when trouble comes, we are to trust in God alone for our salvation. Sometimes God allows trouble to continue in order to teach us to be patient. Moses seemed to think that the exodus would commence the

Exodus I – Notes

moment he started obeying God. But godliness does not guarantee immediate results, and God's plans often take a long time to develop.

Motyer says that “the hinge of the whole Exodus enterprise comes with the *Now* of 6:1.” We've already seen one turning point in the story when God heard the groaning of Israel and remembered His covenant with the patriarchs (2:24). This is the next great turning point; there will be no more failure in the contest against Egypt. The stage has been set: Pharaoh has hardened his heart and raised his hand against heaven. But God is going to take the hand of Pharaoh and use it for His own purposes. It is not enough that God will turn Pharaoh's hand or power against the king's own will, but God will do it with such force that Pharaoh will literally “expel” Israel from Egypt. The word translated as “drive out” is the same one that describes how the shepherds kept the daughters of Jethro away from the well in 2:17. It also is part of the root of Gershom's name, reminding Moses that he had been driven out of Egypt once before.

2. *I Am the LORD (6:2-5)*

God's encouragement to Moses does not end in chapter 6, verse 1; it only just begins! In the verses that follow, God reminds Moses of what He has done in the past (vv. 3-4), what He is doing in the present (v. 5), and what He will do in the future (vv. 6-8). This reminder of God's activity in history is punctuated throughout by the phrase, “I am the LORD” (Ex. 6:2, 6, 7, 8). The emphasis on God's covenant name – Yahweh – should remind us that salvation begins and ends with the LORD. Yahweh was the one who would accomplish the great miracle of the exodus, not Moses. It was the LORD who defeated Pharaoh, not Moses. It was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who displayed His wonders in Egypt, not Moses. It was the covenant Maker and covenant Keeper who did all these things, not Moses. It is God who says, “I am the LORD;” it is the LORD who accomplishes salvation.

³I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them. ⁴I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.

⁵And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant (Exodus 6:3-5).

Verse 3 often causes confusion. We've already seen in our study of the name Yahweh (Ex. 3:14-15), that the Tetragrammaton YHWH—translated as the LORD into English—was used well over 100 times in the book of Genesis. Each of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—interacted with God as “the LORD.” Liberal theologians like to use this “inconsistency” to point out the Bible is flawed or that multiple editors “redacted” Genesis to insert the name of Yahweh into Genesis as an anachronism.

However, as we have also seen, the word “to know” has a much deeper connotation in Hebrew than mere knowledge of information. It is not that the patriarchs had never *heard* the name of the LORD before, but they did not have a full *understanding* of what the name meant. The patriarchs had received the promises of *El Shaddai* – God Almighty (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11) – the covenant-making God. But they had not seen the promises fulfilled by Yahweh, the covenant-remembering and covenant-keeping God. It is only in the experience of the exodus that the full knowledge of Yahweh as redeemer is known.

Exodus I – Notes

3. *The Seven “I Wills” (6:6-8)*

In verses 3-4, God reminds Moses that He is *El Shaddai* – the God who covenanted with the patriarchs in the past. In verse 5, God reminds Moses that He has currently heard the cries of Israel and is currently remembering His covenant to fulfill it in the present (*cp.* 2:24-25). And now in verses 6-8, God describes to Moses what He will do to complete His great redemption. In these verses, God says “I will” seven times, indicating the perfection of God’s plan and its accomplishment. Although it has not yet happened, it is as good as done. Nothing can prevent God from fulfilling the seven “I wills” of salvation. What is the basis for the seven “I wills”? The name of the LORD. It is repeated three times in this passage, at the beginning, middle, and end. God’s name of Yahweh guarantees the fulfillment of the promises.

⁶Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the LORD; *I will* bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, *I will* rescue you from their bondage, and *I will* redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷*I will* take you as My people, and *I will* be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸And *I will* bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and *I will* give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD’ (Exodus 6:6-8, emphasis added).

The seven promises or “I wills” of God really break down into three main categories: 1) salvation; 2) adoption; and 3) inheritance. The first three promises in verse 6 all speak of salvation – of deliverance, rescue, and redemption. But God’s salvation is more than liberation; He does more than simply bring freedom to captives. God *redeems* Israel from their bondage in Egypt. The Hebrew word for “redeem” – *go-el* – has a rich meaning. On the one hand, it signifies that payment must be given for the person or object that is being redeemed. Leviticus 25 gives the law of redemption for land and for slaves – an appropriate price must be paid for redemption (Lev. 25:23-34; 47-55). Ryken points out that ironically it is the Egyptians who end up paying the price!

On the other hand, the Hebrew concept of redemption also has an aspect of close, personal relationship. This concept is also present in Leviticus 25:

²⁵If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his *kinsman-redeemer* comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold...
⁴⁷Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger’s family, ⁴⁸after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him; ⁴⁹or his uncle or his uncle’s son may redeem him; or *anyone who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him*; or if he is able he may redeem himself (Leviticus 25:25, 47-49; emphasis added).

The *go-el* is the “kinsman-redeemer,” the one who pays the redemption price for a close relative. This is the underlying concept of the book of Ruth, where Boaz is the *go-el* who acts as a kinsman-redeemer toward Ruth (Ruth 4:3-8). In the case of the exodus, God is acting as the *go-el*, the kinsman-redeemer who rescues His “firstborn son” (4:22).

This concept of kinship implied by God’s redemption of Israel is amplified in the next two “I wills” of verse 7. “I will take you as My people and I will be your God” is the heart of the covenant. This is the Immanuel Principle – God dwelling in the midst of His people. God’s

Exodus I – Notes

people are *adopted* by Him and are intimately connected with Him. Notice that both aspects of God's presence in the midst of His people are initiated by Him: He chooses Israel to be His people, and He chooses to be Israel's God. Israel had no say in the matter. Adoption is via the will of the parent, not the will of the child. Just as there was nothing Israel could do to pay the ransom price and gain freedom from Egypt through their own power, they contributed nothing to their adoption and entrance into covenant relationship with God. It is all of God's glorious and free grace.

Finally, the last two "I wills" in verse 8 speak of *inheritance*: God will deliver on His promise to give the land of Canaan to Israel as their heritage. Again, this inheritance comes as a free gift of grace from the Father – it is not merited or earned by Israel.

How's that for encouragement? Moses got a lot more than he anticipated when he came to God in prayer! Moses was re-reminded that God is in the promise-making and promise-keeping business. The promises He made to the patriarchs would surely be fulfilled. And this fulfillment did not depend on Moses' ability, Israel's belief, or Pharaoh's kindness. It depended solely on the name of God – I am the LORD – and His power.

4. Repeat Instructions (6:9-13)

"In verse 9 we turn from the 'I wills' of salvation to the 'I won't' of Israel" (Ryken). Moses delivered God's message of encouragement to Israel, but under the crushing weight of their bondage and affliction they could not or would not listen. Their spirits had been broken by the oppression of Pharaoh; they had lost all hope in rescue or redemption. They could not believe what Moses had to say and shut their ears to the word of God.

This is the picture of the unbeliever in sin. Bondage to sin is infinitely worse than bondage to Pharaoh. Sin is a cruel taskmaster that robs us of hope and keeps us powerless in its grasp. Ryken points out:

The bonds of sin are so tight that they prevent the sinner from truly hearing the good news of the gospel. Theologians call this the doctrine of "total inability," which simply means that sinners cannot come to God on their own. Sinners cannot save themselves because they cannot and will not come to God. This is perfectly illustrated by the Israelites, who would not listen to the promise of freedom exactly because they were enslaved.

The despair of Israel rubs off on Moses, because he falls into the same trap he did previously. God tells Moses to go back to Pharaoh a second time. Ryken describes the first time gives this command as the "call" (3:10); here it is the "re-call." However, just like before, Moses doubts that Pharaoh will listen. Moses essentially says, "If Your people won't listen, why should I expect anything different from Pharaoh?" To top it off, Moses seems to pull out the old speech impediment excuse again, although he uses a different term for it: "uncircumcised lips" (v. 12).

The meaning of "uncircumcised lips" is somewhat different than the earlier excuse of "a heavy mouth and a heavy tongue" (4:10). That which is uncircumcised is unholy and unfit for service. Moses had learned that lesson on the way to Egypt when God confronted him about the circumcision of his son. Rather than complaining about his inability, Moses may be describing his unsuitability. He seems to be saying that he is unfit or unworthy of God's re-call because he has failed with Pharaoh and he has failed with Israel. He doesn't feel worthy to be God's messenger.

Exodus I – Notes

God does not accept Moses' argument. God has called Moses, and He has re-called Moses. He tells Moses once again to go to Pharaoh, but this time, the command is also directed to Aaron. This is a not-so-subtle reminder that this conversation has already taken place and that a solution has already been provided. Aaron is the mouthpiece of Moses. "Their mission is to continue despite the objections of Moses, the apathy of the Hebrews, and the hatred of the Egyptians" (Currid).

B. The Sons of Levi (6:14-27)

It is at this point we have a strange and unexpected interlude, as a genealogy pops up out of nowhere. Although it may seem unusual to our western minds to interrupt the story with a genealogy at this point, it is not randomly inserted, as some liberal commentators might suggest. If you look at the verses before and after the genealogy (6:10-12, 28-30), you will notice that they are basically saying the same thing. In other words, they form an *inclusio* to frame the genealogy, to set it apart. Thus, after the genealogy is finished, our story picks up right where it left off, not missing a beat. The task for us then, regarding this genealogy, is twofold: to understand 1) why it is here; and 2) what does it teach us?

If you study the genealogy, you will notice that it has a very particular focus. Although it starts out broadly with Reuben and Simeon in verse 14-15, it quickly narrows down to the family of Levi, the third son of Jacob (vv. 16-25). Furthermore, it narrows down even further to a particular branch of the Levitical family – the branch of Kohath (vv. 20-25). Thus, it is not a description of who was in Egypt or who came out of Egypt. That accounting will be given later, in the book of Numbers.

The purpose for the genealogy seems to be summarized in the last two verses:

- a ²⁶These are the same Aaron and Moses
- b to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies."
- b' ²⁷These are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt.
- a These are the same Moses and Aaron (Exodus 6:26-27).

The way I've displayed these two verses shows their chiasmic structure. The repetition of "These are the same" (Aaron and Moses or Moses and Aaron) serves to bracket these final two verses and highlight the purpose for the genealogy: to verify the pedigree of Moses and Aaron, the two human leaders of the exodus.

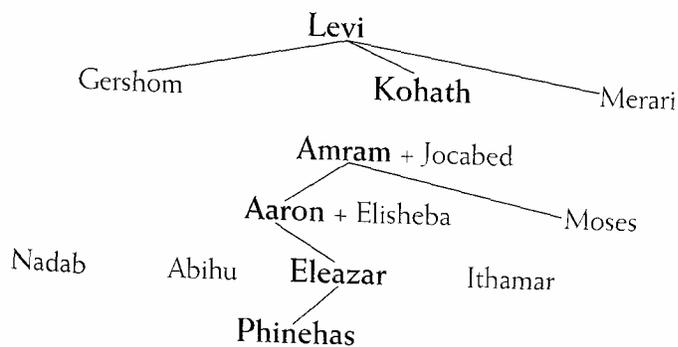
Moses was not really an Egyptian prince; first and foremost he was a descendant of the tribe of Levi. Thus, he was qualified to be the human leader of Israel at this time. In addition, Aaron was a worthy participant. Enns points out that the genealogy is inserted in the place where Moses once again describes his inability to speak. The first time he brought this subject up, God promised to give him Aaron as a mouthpiece (4:14-16). God will repeat this again as the conversation picks up again after the genealogy (7:1-2). Thus, the genealogy is also making the point that Aaron is fit to be the mouthpiece of Moses, the prophet of God.

The primary purpose of the genealogy thus seems to be emphasizing the pedigree of the present leaders of Israel at the time of the exodus confrontation with Pharaoh. However, the genealogy also points out to us past connections and future leaders.

Exodus I – Notes

Obviously, a genealogy connects with the past; the whole purpose of a genealogy is to demonstrate the roots from where someone has come. Thus once again, we are reminded in the early chapters of Exodus that the present story has roots in the past. Judah, Simeon, Levi are all historically grounded in the book of Genesis; the book of Exodus is a continuation of their story. This is a gentle reminder that the God of “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” is also the God of Moses and Aaron. God’s promises given to the patriarchs are being fulfilled in the exodus generation.

In addition, this genealogy looks forward to the future; it doesn’t stop with Moses and Aaron. Although the primary purpose is to emphasize the pedigrees of Moses and Aaron, the genealogy continues for two additional generations down to Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. Isn’t it interesting that although Moses is the central figure of the exodus, the genealogical line that is emphasized here is that of Aaron? If you look at the flow of the genealogy, you will notice that six generations from Levi are mentioned, passing through Aaron to his sons and grandson. Thus, the lineage of the high priesthood is highlighted. Aaron is the first high priest, and that responsibility continues through his son Eleazar to his grandson Phinehas. This reminds us that God’s purpose was not only to deliver on His past promises to redeem Israel; it was also to organize future generations for formal worship. After all, that is the overarching theme of the exodus – God saves His people in order that they may worship and glorify Him.



Now that we’ve established the main purposes of the genealogy – 1) to tie back to the past promises of God; 2) to establish the pedigree of the current human leaders of Israel; and 3) to look forward to the future worship leaders of God’s people – let’s look at some of the details for additional lessons.

First, I want to point out that this genealogy, like many in the Bible, is likely “telescoped” or compressed. That is, generations are skipped or omitted. Mackay explains:

Exodus 1:6 plainly indicates that Joseph died before Moses was born. However, we know that Joseph also lived long enough to see his great-grandchildren (Gen. 50:23). As they would be as far removed from Jacob as Moses and Aaron would be on the basis of the compressed genealogy (Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses), it makes it probable that the genealogy has been compressed. This is further supported by the fact that in the genealogies of Chronicles ten generations are listed between Joseph and Joshua (1 Chr. 7:20-29).

Just because the genealogy is compressed does not invalidate it or negate its purpose. Rather, its theological purpose is highlighted – to focus our attention on Moses and Aaron and the lineage of the high priests.

Exodus I – Notes

Amram and Jochebed are indicated as the parents of Moses (6:20). Jochebed is a compound name with *Yah* (shortened form of YHWH) and *kabed* which means “heaviness” or “glory.” Thus, her name – “The LORD is glory” – is another indicator that the name of YHWH was known to the Israelites before the exodus, although the full extent of its meaning had yet to be revealed. However, Amram and Jochebed may be earlier ancestors of Moses based on this view of a telescoped genealogy. Numbers 3:27-28 lists the number of male descendants of Kohath. There were 8600 of them in four families – the families of Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. These four families correspond to the sons of Kohath in 6:18. Since Amram had literally hundreds if not thousands of male descendants at the time of the exodus, it is unlikely that he is the direct father of Moses.

The next interesting name in the genealogy is that of Korah (6:21, 24). Korah was a cousin of Moses, descended from Kohath through Izhar. Korah becomes significant in the book of Numbers, where he leads a rebellion against the authority of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16). Although Korah was given much responsibility as a Levite, he wanted more. This is a common sin in the Scriptures – the desire to grab or seize what does not belong to you. This is the sin of Adam. Korah’s inclusion in this genealogy is a warning to us not to desire or seize position or authority that does not rightfully belong to us. Rather, we should be content with whatever God has given to us.

Two more names in the genealogy are listed as a warning: Nadab and Abihu (6:23). Nadab and Abihu were the two oldest sons of Aaron, and they took the matter of God’s worship into their own hands (Lev. 10:1-2). Not being content to worship God as He had prescribed, they offered “strange fire” to the LORD. God turned that fire around on them and destroyed them where they stood. Nadab and Abihu are a warning to us not to invent new ways to worship God, but rather to worship Him in the way He has commanded us.

Finally, the genealogy ends on a positive note with Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. Phinehas is highly regarded in Scripture. His story of righteousness and zeal is told in Numbers 25:1-18. God was so pleased with Phinehas that he initiated a special covenant of peace with him:

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹¹“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ¹²Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel’” (Numbers 25:10-12).

Phinehas became a military commander (Num. 31:6) and leader in Israel (Jos. 22:32-33; Jdg. 20:28), as well as high priest. Phinehas is highlighted in Psalm 106:30-31 as an example of zeal and righteousness. “Phinehas was a great man and what made him great was his zeal to serve God even when others were turning away. Christ calls us to be like Phinehas: zealous for God’s glory and at the same time making peace within the church” (Ryken).

C. The Plan Recited Yet Again (6:28-7:7)

After the “interruption” of the genealogy, the following verses finish up the conversation between Moses and God. Virtually no new information is given here; it is mainly a repetition of what has been said before. The repetition is done to emphasize the truth of the word of God –

Exodus I – Notes

everything He says will come to pass. The text can be broken down into smaller sections, focusing on different bodies parts.

First, we have the “lips of Moses” (6:28-7:2). To remind us of where we left off before the genealogy, we are once again reminded that Moses has “uncircumcised lips.” However, God is not concerned about Moses’ inability or unsuitability; all He is interested in is Moses’ obedience. Once again God reminds Moses that He has given Aaron to Moses to be his mouthpiece. God will speak to Moses, Moses will speak to Aaron, and Aaron will speak to Pharaoh. Moses will be God’s prophet, and Aaron will be Moses’ prophet. The plan has been recited yet again.

Second, we have the “heart of Pharaoh” (7:3). God once again promises to harden Pharaoh’s heart and multiply His wonders in Egypt. This is a repetition of 4:21. The plan has been recited yet again.

Third, we have the “hand of God” (7:4-5). It is not the “hand of Pharaoh” that will prevail; instead, it is the “hand of God” (*cp.* 3:20) that will be strong and deliver Israel out of Egypt. There are two points of interest here. First, there is the emphasis on Israel as an “army” or host. This was first mentioned in the genealogy (6:26). God’s people are organized as an army, thus indicating that spiritual warfare is taking place. Second, because of God’s great judgments upon their land, Egypt will “know” who the LORD is. Remember, Pharaoh claimed he did not know who the LORD was (5:2). Thus, one of the great purposes of the plagues is to demonstrate the power and glory of God – to show everyone in Egypt and beyond who the LORD is. The plan has been recited yet again.

Finally, we have a summary statement in 7:6-7. Despite all the doubts and complaints, Moses and Aaron obeyed God. They did what He told them. We will not see Moses doubting or complaining again in this quarter. Apparently, after all of the repetition, Moses finally understood what God had been telling him all along. Success or failure did not depend upon Moses’ ability, only upon his obedience. God was going to do the heavy lifting – Moses and Aaron simply needed to be faithful to God’s call (and re-call).

Conclusion

1. Theological

Throughout the entire exodus narrative, we have seen (and will see) many examples of the ability of God and the inability of man. Moses is unable to lead without God’s call, recall, encouragement, and power. Israel is unable to believe the good news of salvation. Pharaoh is unable to change his nature and submit to God.

Although we see the human actors moving about on the earthly stage, it is God in heaven who is making all things happen according to His will: 1) God chose His people and made promises; 2) God heard the prayers of His people and initiated a plan of salvation; 3) God called Moses, overruled all his objections, and made him the leader of Israel; 4) God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, in order that He might display His power through the wonders of Egypt; 5) God delivered His people and fulfilled all His promises.

The power of God to keep His promises is contained in His covenant name – “I am the LORD.” Because He is the LORD, He has the ability to bring His will to pass. Like Moses, we have uncircumcised lips – we are unsuitable and unable. We do not have the power within ourselves to save us. We have “total inability.” But praise God that He has “total ability.” His name – the

Exodus I – Notes

LORD – guarantees that our inability is trumped by His ability. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

YHWH – The LORD – is the Old Covenant name of God that speaks of His ability to save. Today, we have a New Covenant name that speaks of God’s salvation power – Jesus. Jesus means “the LORD saves,” and that is exactly what He does. Jesus is completely suitable and “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

2. *Christological*

You see, the seven “I wills” of salvation (6:6-8) are ultimately and completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. First, Jesus is our *go-el*. He is our kinsman-redeemer, the one who pays the ultimate price for our salvation – His own life. Ephesians 1:7 tells us that “in Him we have redemption through His blood.” Second, Jesus Christ is the means of our adoption into the family of God:

⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5).

Paul speaks of the Church when he applies the Immanuel Principle to us: “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Cor. 6:16). Finally, it is through Christ that we receive our “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven” (1 Pe. 1:4). When the LORD speaks the seven “I wills” of salvation to Old Testament Israel, He is also speaking directly to us, the New Testament Israel. All of these promises are “Yes” and “Amen” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20), “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

3. *Practical*

A proper understanding of our inability and Christ’s ability can revolutionize our Christian lives. Like Moses, we are called to be faithful and obedient. But like Moses, we cannot fulfill God’s call in our own strength. Realization of that should drive us to our knees in prayer for God’s help. Moses took his complaint to God, and look at the answer to his prayer! Moses learned that his inability and unsuitability were not impediments to God’s plan – in fact, they were the very keys to God’s success. God was going to accomplish the great salvation He had planned, and yet He still called Moses to lead God’s people. God didn’t need Moses, but He worked through Moses, warts and all, and He can and will use us to accomplish His will on earth today.

Have you wondered why God kept repeating and repeating the plan to Moses (and to Israel and to us)? Because sometimes we just don’t get the message the first time (or the second or third time either). But God is patient with us, working with us and through us to accomplish His will. He could do it without us; one of the great mysteries of the gospel is that He chooses to work through us. Therefore, let us submit to God, seek His will through prayer, and realize our inability is made ability through Christ:

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

Close in Prayer.

Next week: Lesson 8 – Let the Plagues Begin! – Ex. 7:8-25