

Lesson 2 Lecture – God Begins to Demonstrate His Power

Exodus 4:18-7:13

Greetings! For those of you returning to People of the Word, welcome back! For those of you new to the study, I am so grateful you are joining us! Far more importantly, God is so very pleased you've chosen to get to know Him more through His Word. I pray each of you is finding the presence of the Lord comforting, restoring, encouraging, and life-giving. We are living in an extraordinary time. Personally, one of the most challenging components of this pandemic has been trying to figure out what is true and what is a lie. The politicizing of this pandemic has been a playground of misinformation, biased media-driven agendas, and fear-mongering leaving many of us either bewildered, angry, or both. I am thankful you are choosing to study God's Word because it *is* the source of truth. Jesus said He is the way, *the truth*, and the life in John 14:6. Truth matters. It is a place of rest and comfort, so God bless you for choosing to pursue the truth in this world full of lies.

As we open up today's reading, we get a glimpse of one of the reasons God chose Moses – his humility. He asked his father-in-law, Jethro, if he may go and return to Egypt to see if his brethren are still alive. Now, if Moses was in his early 20s, a request of a father-in-law to take his daughter to another land would be a nice gesture. However, Moses is 80! What extraordinary humility this man had to still show such respect for his father-in-law.

Maintaining a state of humility and humbleness is a critical characteristic of a true follower of Christ. If you're walking around with your chest puffed out and thinking you're all that, the chances are you're not listening to God and seeking His direction. Galatians 6:3 offers this warning, "*For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*" The best book I have ever read on the topic of humility is Andrew Murray's "*Absolute Surrender*". One of my favorite quotes from this book is, "*every one of us is a temple of God, in which God will dwell and work mightily on one condition—absolute surrender to him.*"

Numbers 12:3 confirms this special character trait of Moses, "*Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.*" I have zero doubt that Moses' humbleness and humility made him someone God could work with. James 4:6b encourages us, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" Psalm 34:18 promises, "*The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.*" Moses' humility, though, got in his way at times. His acute self-awareness of his limitations became an impediment to letting God fill the gaps of his limitations. We've seen that already, and we're going to see some more of it in today's reading.

From Warren Wiersbe's commentary, he notes that the Lord gave Moses five encouragements in chapter 4. The first of which was getting his father-in-law's blessing. Jethro gave Moses the go ahead to go back to Egypt, and the Lord confirmed to him that the men who sought to kill him were all dead. So, he took his wife and sons and returned to Egypt.

In chapter 4, verse 21, God commanded Moses to do all those wonders before Pharaoh via his rod. However, he ended this verse with a difficult sentence, "*But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.*" One of the more remarkable character traits of God is His heart to forgive and restore people. Remember what Jesus said in John 3:17, "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*" How do we reconcile a God who restores with a God who hardens hearts?

Given God is eternal, He is both omniscient and omnipresent. This means He *sees* everything from beginning to end and, therefore, *knows* everything from beginning to end. He knows each of our beginnings and ends. In Pharaoh's case, God saw his beginning and end and saw he would never turn to Him. The Lord gives each of us the ability to choose – free will. He does this because He knows a love-based relationship has its greatest potential when the two parties *choose* to love each other. However, the gift of free will comes with its inseparable partner – consequences of those choices. For free will to be real, God must honor the choices. Because God saw Pharaoh's ending, He saw that his heart was going to be hardened. Therefore, in this situation, God was only moving up the speed of this process to accomplish His good will for the nation of Israel.

One last thought on the hardening of a heart. God is love (1 John 4:16). God is merciful (James 5:11). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). Since these are all true of God, we can take from these verses that God is *not* the one hardening our hearts. A heart that has been hardened has gotten to this point over a series of painful experiences and choices on how to respond to those experiences. In each painful moment of our life, we have a choice. We can choose to wallow in that pain and, thereby, forego the hope of relief. Or, we can choose to seek God and ask for relief. Question 12.b. from today's homework poses this very question.

Admittedly, the hard part of the option of seeking God for relief, is what if that relief you are looking for from Him is nowhere to be found? I've been there. These are the tests of faith – this is the desert some of us must walk through. Are we willing to allow our hearts to endure painful circumstances to allow God to reveal Himself and His faithfulness? If we do not, that is how the heart hardens itself towards God. In our painful situations, we must cling to what is promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "*but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted*

beyond what you are able.” I will tell you it’s easier said than done, but I can also testify to the truth of this promise.

Back to our story – in verses 19-23 we get to the second encouragement from the Lord to Moses – He promised things were going to happen. He told Moses that he shall say to Pharaoh, ‘*Thus says the LORD: “Israel is My son, My firstborn. So, I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.”*’ We should not ignore the grace of God in this scenario. Given He knew Pharaoh was going to reject Him, why wouldn’t God have just wiped him out and spare all the death and carnage from the plagues? I pose that Pharaoh was not the sole audience in this situation. God was revealing Himself not just to Pharaoh, but also to the people of Egypt and, most importantly, the nation of Israel. Notably, all of this destruction could have been avoided if Pharaoh had chosen to comply with the request to let the people go. Once again, we see the inevitable link to free will and consequences.

In verses 24-26, we find a curious interlude as well as the third encouragement from the Lord. He met Moses on the way back to Egypt and sought to kill him! Why would God want to kill the very one He would use to emancipate his children from Egypt? For those who are in authority in the Kingdom, this is an important lesson. As a Kingdom leader, you are expected to be a role model for Christ. If *your* house is not in order, how are you qualified to be a leader in *God’s* house? The issue here was Moses had not yet performed circumcision on his son. From Genesis 17, circumcision of every male Jewish child was an acknowledgment of a covenant between God and Abraham’s seed. Moses was being asked to pronounce judgment on Egypt, but he didn’t even have his own house in order.

His wife, Zipporah, who was a Midianite, did not share the same faith as Moses. She probably was horrified when he circumcised their first son, Gershom. No doubt, her reaction and different beliefs impacted Moses’ adherence to his own faith. This is a great example that husbands and wives are not to be unequally yoked. Marriage can be hard enough, but if you can at least have one thing you can agree upon – faith in God, you have at least a starting place for healing and restoration. Zipporah must have recognized God’s intentions towards Moses and performed the circumcision herself with a sharp stone. Her act of faith was the third encouragement from the Lord. This one, though, came with a price. She then gave Moses an earful, “*Surely you are a husband of blood to me!*” God relented, and to make sure Moses heard her, she let him have it again.

Moses’ older brother, Aaron, was brought back into the story in verse 27 and was the fourth encouragement from the Lord. The Lord said to him, “*Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.*” *So, he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. So, Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and*

all the signs which He had commanded him." The next step of their mission was to inform all the elders of the children of Israel God's plan. To demonstrate the power that was behind their mission, Moses did the signs in the sight of the people.

As a result of these signs, the people believed, and this was the fifth encouragement from the Lord. I want to pause here because the issue of signs and wonders is a controversial topic within the church of Christ. The Pentecostal and Charismatic segments of the church believe that these gifts are still available today. Because God does not change, and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, I'm in agreement with their position. *However*, for many of these churches, they have overemphasized the necessity of these as if the evidence of God's love and power demonstrated via the crucifixion and resurrection isn't enough proof. Signs and wonders are intended solely to demonstrate God's presence – not to be some sideshow that stirs the emotions. As we are about to see, faith built on signs and wonders does not last. Notably, what was it that moved the people to bow their heads and worship? The Word of God – the word that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked on their affliction. The Word of God is what truly moves hearts and builds faith.

Moving into chapter 5, the drama began to unfold. Moses and Aaron delivered the message to Pharaoh, "*Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'*" In verse 2, Pharaoh asked the most important question each and ever human being needs to ask, "*Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice.*" I hope you took some time to truly consider your answer to question 6.b. of the homework. Who is the Lord *to you* that you should obey His voice? The word "Lord" comes from one of his names, "*Adonai*". One definition of this name is, "*someone or something having power, authority, or influence; a master or ruler.*"

Is this how you see the Lord God to you? In a Master/servant relationship, the servant has no right to say "*no*" to his/hers Master's directive. No one can claim they perfectly obey the Lord. Those that do make such a claim are deceiving themselves. To get close to living such a life, one has to get back to the mindset of humility and surrender. For most of us, we have to learn this the hard way. We are determined to do things our way, but only when we find out our way is not the best way, do we arrive at a state of brokenness that we acknowledge God's ways are better than our ways. If you're anything like me, this is a battle you struggle with time and time again. I thank God He is so patient with me.

As God predicted, Pharaoh would not let the people go. Moses and Aaron then altered the request in hopes Pharaoh would be more responsive. They asked him to give them three days into the desert to sacrifice to the Lord to avoid His wrath through pestilence or the sword. Pharaoh's response was predictable. He refused and made their lives even more miserable by making them gather their own

straw to make bricks. Understandably, the people were not happy, and Pharaoh notably gave them an audience. I would argue that this extraordinary acceptance had an evil intention. I believe he knew Moses and Aaron were a threat, so by letting the people complain to him, he could then vilify Moses and Aaron. Then, their own people would get rid of them – problem solved.

Well, Pharaoh got it right – the people lambasted Moses and Aaron in verse 5:21, “*Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.*” Let’s take a brief pause and look at Moses’ and Aaron’s paths to this point. Moses was minding his own business in a desert, and He met the Lord in a burning bush. The Lord commanded him to confront one of the most powerful men in the world knowing full well, initially, that encounter was going to be tough. Moreover, not only was it going to be difficult dealing with Pharaoh, but also his own people were going to turn on him. For Aaron, he was told to go see his brother thinking it’s a simple visit, and now he is taking orders from his younger brother and a “partner in crime” to his brother’s exploits. Can you blame Moses’ response in 5:22, “*Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?*” He went on to judge God that He had not delivered His people at all.

Have you ever been impatient with the Lord? Have you not seen the promises He makes materialize in your life? It’s not easy to keep the faith when you’re in pain or suffering, is it? Personally, I believe being a Christian is harder than being a non-believer at times because when either I am in pain or I see an injustice going seemingly unpunished – it’s more difficult to comprehend because I believe in a God who is greater than these and can resolve them with one word. Faith is not easy, my brothers and sisters. This is why it is so critical to stay in God’s Word because the truth of His character is revealed. God does not change, so His goodness and faithfulness will show up at some point. If it does not show up when you want it to, then your faith must drive you to the point that God has an important purpose for what you’re going through. Furthermore, the fruit of that purpose will build a greater trust in Him and cause you to demonstrate that same character to those He brings into your life.

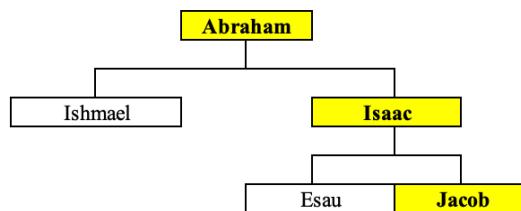
Heading into chapter 6, question 11.b. from the homework asks us to point out the seven “I will” statements. Remember, the number 7 in Scripture means completion, so if you spend some time thinking about each of these statements, you will find the completeness of the salvation process God does for the believer. I would like to point out, though, that there are matching “bookends” to these 7 “I will” statements. They are found in verse 2 and verse 8. These bookend statements are “*I am the Lord.*” For me, my highest pursuit is to understand and believe in the character of God as it is revealed in Scriptures. God says many things about

Himself and His character, but He also proves the validity and infallibility of His character through the things He “*will do*”.

There is an unavoidable link between character and the actions that support and prove the character. Just as we’re told by James that faith without works is dead – God without actions to support the truth of His character isn’t much of a God, is He? If Jesus were resurrected but then offered nothing more to those who believe in Him, that would make the power of His resurrection pretty useless. Thankfully, the Son of God offers more “*I will*” statements in John 14:2-21 as noted from question 11.c. of the homework. These statements include His love, His responsiveness to our needs, the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of His return. God is true to His character through His actions of mercy and grace.

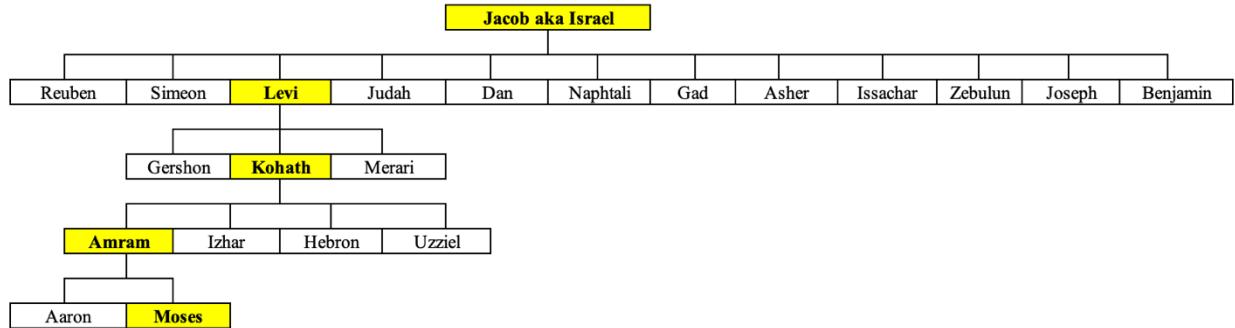
In verses 12 and 30 of chapter 5, Moses offered the excuse of his “*faltering*” lips as a reason Pharaoh wouldn’t listen to him when he asked them to let the children of Israel go out of Egypt. The NKJV uses “*uncircumcised*” instead of faltering, and the NASB version uses the phrase “*unskilled in speech*.” Was Moses just making excuses to not serve the Lord? Possibly, but perhaps he was genuinely concerned that his shortcomings would prevent the Lord from succeeding in His will. Given Moses’ character, I would argue the latter, but He was still thinking the ultimate success of what God wanted to do was up to him. God’s will, will be done, whether we are going to get in the game or not. As you read this section of Scripture and the rest of the Bible, who is doing all the heavy lifting? – God! God will get done what He purposed, but it is *His choice* for us to join Him. He does this because He knows we will be blessed by the evidence of His presence and His power. Furthermore, we will get the confirmation of the truth of who He says He is and what He says He will do. God ignored Moses’ complaint about himself and commanded him in verse 13 to go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and allow him to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Verses 14-27 provide a listing of several lineages, but for the purpose of this lesson, we’re going to focus on Moses’ ancestry. The first family tree noted below is that of the founding fathers of the Nation of Israel beginning with Abraham.



You may recall Abraham had a child of the flesh named Ishmael. God had promised Abraham that he and Sara would produce a son – despite their being in their 80s. Via Sara’s misguided encouragement, Abraham fathered a son with an Egyptian handmade, Hagar. God did not honor this son as Abraham and Sara

eventually would produce a son, Isaac. Isaac had two sons, and Jacob's line would be the one that God would bless. Later to be named Israel, Jacob produced 12 sons – they are listed below.



Levi was Jacob's third son, and his family was designated as a family of priests. As you can see, Moses was Levi's great-grandson, and Jacob was Moses' great-great grandfather. Notably, Scripture doesn't spend much more time on Moses' lineage because the lineage that truly matters is Jesus'. You also may recall Jesus' lineage traced back through Judah, Jacob's fourth son. You may be asking why this was necessary? The simple answer is God saw it important enough to put it in His Word. However, understanding Moses' and Aaron's lineage to the priestly line to Levi was an important reminder of their heritage and purpose in serving God. Just as God wants us to know about Him, He wants others to know about the servants He works with to validate His purposes in their lives.

Moving into chapter seven, the Lord said, "*See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.*" (7:1) Hearing God tell a human being that he will be as God to another human being might seem odd. But God was dealing specifically with Pharaoh at this point. He knew Pharaoh had no regard for the true God, so He was going to reveal Himself through Moses as if Moses was God. He can do this because He knew Moses – He knew Moses was going to give God all the glory for all that He was doing through him. God will do the same for each one of us who truly understand that the good and the power we accomplish is solely because of God opting to work through us. It's not us – we're merely vessels. The blessings of being a vessel of God should be more than enough satisfaction for us. Giving God the glory for the things He does through us is the most important thing we can do as followers of Jesus Christ.

The Lord informed Moses and Aaron what was about to happen. They were to tell Pharaoh to let the people go. Pharaoh would harden his heart despite God multiplying His signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. God said He will, "*lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.*" (7:4) Who are "*My armies*"? These are angels – evidence of the Godly protection He was providing – and will provide His

beloved children. He did that for His children then, and He does that for His adopted children in Christ today.

In verse 5a of chapter 7, God revealed the purpose of what He was doing in all of this, “*And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD*”. God is not a secret God. He reveals Himself to us every day through His creation and, if we choose to read it, His Word. His heart is to reveal Himself for the purpose of reconciling His creation to Him. How is God revealing Himself to you? I challenge you to ask Him that question this week!

Did you notice the ages of Moses and Aaron? – 80 and 83. Why do you think God pointed these facts out? You may think it is kind of a random verse or some side comment, but everything God says has purpose and meaning. I believe there are at least two reasons for mentioning their ages. First, He said this to make us realize these men were not some young, virile imposing men to Pharaoh. They were older men, so they posed no physical threat to Pharaoh. He would see that any power they had wasn’t coming from them but through the true and living God. The second reason is to remind us that no matter our age, God can do very powerful and wonderful things if we have a willing heart.

The final scene of our reading is the demonstration of power from God vs. the Satan-led power of Pharaoh’s wise men and sorcerers. Aaron casted his rod down, and it became a serpent. Pharaoh summoned his guys, and they were able to do the same creating many serpents. That may seem scary, but the conclusion of this conflict was Aaron’s rods swallowing up all the rods of the magicians. What’s the message here? Satan is powerful, but he is no match for God’s power.

This is the message we need to heed at this very time in history. The amount of blatant evil and immorality is escalating at unprecedented levels, and the power behind it all may seem unstoppable. It may seem like Satan is in control, but don’t you fret. God is in complete control, and His glory, His power, His righteousness, and His unbending devotion to those He calls His own *will be revealed*. He did it back in Exodus, and He doesn’t change. He will do it again, and we will be praising Him and thanking Him throughout eternity for His glorious character and the things He does to prove it to be true.

Father, I lift up each and every person who is participating in this year’s People of the Word study. May You reveal Yourself anew and afresh in each of their hearts. May you restore and build their trust in You as You demonstrate day-in and day-out Your faithfulness, Your goodness, Your love, and Your devotion to each of them. In Jesus name, amen!