

Egypt & Exodus

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 1: YHWH's Formal Introduction

Exodus 1

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- March 8, 2020

Introduction

... and Exodus comes after Genesis. We finished up with Genesis last week. Genesis is eight key signs, four events, and then four people. There is the creation and then the fall, a flood of all the world, and then nations. God brings His salvation through a family, and that family --- the father, the patriarch, is Abraham --- all the stars. And that son is Isaac. The son of Isaac is Jacob. The son of Jacob to remember is Joseph.

Joseph, we found last week, finds himself in Egypt. And at the end of the book it says that seventy-two Hebrews are now moving to Egypt so that they might be, in a sense, quarantined, so that they might become a nation that God promised Abraham.

When you turn the page and find yourself at the beginning of the Book of Exodus, it's 400 years later. Now there are two to three million Hebrews living there and all is well as they live in Goshen. But there's an ominous sentence that happens in chapter 1, verse 8, where it says, "And there arose a Pharaoh who knew not of Joseph. And he said to his leaders, 'Look at these Hebrews. They are becoming more and mightier than we are. We need to enslave them so that we might control them.'"

And Exodus is like the book says: it's time to exit. And in that exodus, there are introductions --- rather, a real formal introduction to God, YHWH.

If you saw the movie *The Patriot* --- it was twenty years ago -- that hurt when I looked it up -- twenty years ago --- Mel Gibson plays Benjamin Martin. He is a calm and quiet gentleman farmer. He lives in South Carolina. The time is 1776 and the various states are joining to fight a war of independence against Britain. And Benjamin Martin wants nothing to do with this war. His pacifism angers his family. His desire to just stay out of this and watch it pass makes particularly his two eldest sons embarrassed.

And then South Carolina does join the battle for independence, the war with Britain, and his eldest son Gabriel is first to sign up. He volunteers without his father's permission, and soon after that he's captured. And he's captured by --- introduction of a new character --- the evil character in this story, Colonel Tavington. And Tavington will be used to show us what kind of a man Benjamin Martin is. He's captured his eldest son, he's going to take him to trial so that he might be hung as a traitor. All of this is taking place in the front yard of Benjamin Martin with his large family standing on the steps of their house. The second-born son won't have this. He charges and the Colonel shoots him in the heart in front of everyone. And that boy dies in the arms of Benjamin Martin. They burn the house down and take the eldest son away. And at that moment something changes in Benjamin Martin. He runs into a burning house, goes under and finds a foot locker full of weapons that the family never knew he had, comes back down and starts barking out orders in ways that the family had never seen him. He grabs some of the older boys and takes them with him and he says this: "Aim small, miss small." And in a period of about seven minutes he takes out an entire British battalion and saves his oldest son.

The boys are shocked. This is not the father they knew. And with this event and the events that continue in the progression of the revelation of this movie, we find that Benjamin Martin is notorious -- famous for striking fear in others. He gets a reputation. His name is "The Ghost." He is a genius in the field of combat. His heroism is breathtaking. He ends up being the turning point of the war itself. He's a hero.

Tavington was used to bring that out so that we might see that this man was more than a mild rancher or a good father and a bad furniture maker. His family knew him as "Daddy" but they never knew him as "Father." They didn't know the real Benjamin Martin and all that he could be.

Exodus

When you look at the Book of Exodus, you need to see that's what's taking place there. There's an antihero in this one. It's Pharaoh. And God is using Pharaoh to introduce himself to creation in a whole new way. He's going to introduce himself as YHWH. He needs Pharaoh to be part of that introduction.

Exodus 5:2

But Pharaoh said, “Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know YHWH and besides, I will not let Israel go.”

And it starts with a condescending question from Pharaoh when Moses addresses the Pharaoh about YHWH’s desire for His people. He says this. “And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know YHWH and besides, I will not let Israel go.’”

Exodus 6:2-3

God also said to Moses, “I am YHWH. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name YHWH I did not make myself fully known to them.”

So here’s the story of Exodus. Here’s the theme. “God also said to Moses, ‘I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by name YHWH I did not make myself fully known to them.’”

They just knew me as God Almighty. I’m rolling this out. This is who I really am. I’m going to use Pharaoh so that everybody knows who I am.

Exodus 6:6-7

“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am YHWH, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am YHWH your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

“ ‘Therefore, say to the Israelites: “I am YHWH, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you”’” – the first time this word “redemption” is used in the Bible story – “ ‘ “I will redeem you with an

outstretched arm and with the mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am YHWH your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.”””

This is our learning point for the day. Who is YHWH and why should you obey His voice? That’s the point. When you listen through and you study the ten plagues taking place in Exodus 1 through 13 you’ll see --- that’s what he’s trying to communicate, not just to the Egyptians, not just to the Hebrews, but to all of mankind and to you and to me. You have to know when you read the Book of Exodus the context of what’s taking place so you can make sense of these plagues.

False Gods or Idols

It’s not just a war with Pharaoh or the Egyptians. It is about the gods of Egypt and their idols. What’s happening here is a war. And it’s a spiritual war. And God’s making sure that we can see it. We can see what’s happening spiritually, but we can see it in the physical. And so, all these things are going to be displayed so that all the senses can appreciate the memory that God’s making. And the memory He’s making is showing off His superior power as the creator and the designer of all things so that the people of faith like you and me could live in greater faith.

But this is a spiritual war. And with that “Who is YHWH that I should obey him? Who is YHWH that I should listen to his voice?” That’s the ringing of a bell. It’s no holds barred from this point on and the winner takes Israel. When you read through the plagues you need to be watching or highlighting or listening for the ten times these plagues are introduced or concluded with “so that all of Israel would know that I am YHWH. And then another six times it says “so that all the Egyptians would know that I am YHWH.” And then multiple times, “so that all of man would know that I am YHWH.”

“Who is YHWH that I should obey him? Who is YHWH that I should listen to his voice?” And this storyline continues and it’s going to come up again in Deuteronomy. And then Joshua is going to know about it and so are all the people that Joshua’s going to be going up against. It shows up in the Kingdom Period about 500 years later. Jeremiah quotes this epic of time because of his being a prophet and says, “Look who YHWH is.” He keeps showing up all the time. He’s wanting all the people to know these stories so they can have confidence in who YHWH is.

It's about the false gods of Egypt. Egypt is probably the most polytheistic culture in the ancient Near East. And it wasn't just that they had many gods, but particularly in this story it's important to know, that Pharaoh is a god. He is the son of a god of some kind. In this case, he is most likely the son of the god of Ra, the god of light. That's why the last plague is the plague of darkness.

And it's not just about the rulership of the gods, but about Pharaoh himself. And as one of those gods, as Pharaoh, he doesn't get to just rule the people, but he's responsible for justice, peace, and prosperity. And that's why these plagues will be directed, eventually, towards him.

We Have Modern-Day Idols

Now let's just pause and not be looking back on history with an attitude of historical snobbery like "those pagan people." We still have false gods and idols.

There are more idols in the world than there are realities.

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche, the atheist, says that "There are more idols in the world than there are realities."

We may not physically kneel before the statue of Aphrodite, but many young women today are driven into depression and eating disorders by an obsessive concern over their body image.

We may not actually burn incense to Artemis, but when money and career are raised to cosmic proportions, we perform a kind of child sacrifice, neglecting family and community to achieve a higher place in business and gain more wealth and prestige.

The human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.

--- Tim Keller

Tim Keller, the famous pastor up in New York City, said that the human heart is an idol factory. Listen to what he writes: “We may not physically kneel down before the statues of Aphrodite, but many young women today are driven into depression and eating disorders by an obsessive concern over their body image.

“We may not actually burn incense to Artemis, but when money and career are raised to cosmic proportions, we perform a kind of child sacrifice, neglecting family and community to achieve a higher place in the business of wealth and prestige.

“The human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them and make them the center of our lives, because, we think, we can find significance and security and happiness ultimately in these things.”

We take good things, God-given things, and we turn them into ultimate things. When I was in my mid-thirties it just happened sometimes and you don’t know how or why it happened. But when I was in my mid-thirties I found myself having made an idol out of – I don’t know if it’s the American dream, but it was certainly a family dream, the Cassidy dream. And that was that I wanted my children to grow up and go the same elementary school that would feed to the junior high that would feed to the high school. I would like them to stay in one place for that time in their life. It might be because of a reaction. That was my experience, I enjoyed that. But prior to me getting here at four years old, my father moved every two years and I didn’t want any part of that and I liked what I had and everybody should have that and that’s what happiness is, that’s where stability is found. That’s how I can be a good provider and protector for my family. And somewhere, somehow, that became more important than my walk with God. And I didn’t know it until I started finding myself making compromises and sometimes even overworking to the point where I physically damaged my body for life. And I was doing things and saying things because I didn’t want to leave. It was time to leave. And it never occurred to me that I should look. And God had to step in because it was literally destroying my body and soul and it was pointed out to me that that was the case. And I had to release that idol. I had to let Him slay that god in my life so that I could be free.

An idol is something that you must have to be happy. An easy symptom of an idol in your life would be when you lie. Lying – why would anyone lie – ever? It shouldn’t be that hard to tell the truth. But many times, we tell the lie because we’re trying to grasp something that

maybe we've turned into something more than it should be – something good, and it's become an ultimate thing, like our reputation or other people's approval. I'll lie so that other people will continue to approve of me. I'll lie so that I can retain or even gain some kind of power. I can lie to keep a few bucks so that I can have financial advantage. Every time we compromise some kind of ethic and our soul says, *What?* just keep in mind that you have some kind of priority that you're willing to lie to make sure this must happen, because you've turned that into an idol.

And here's the secret to change in many people's lives. The secret to change is the ability to identify an idol or a false god in your life and let God's Spirit attack that. Let Him go after it like a plague and dismantle it. And so, you listen to what you fear. You listen to your emotions when you think you might lose something, like in my case, that I would have to move. Oh, no! Why so panicked? Maybe it's more than it ought to be. Listen to yourself when you're condemning yourself. Maybe overzealously, because you didn't achieve a certain thing at a certain time, or that person might be leaving you for some reason. Look at your energy levels. That's usually right. You know, if you've got the little beach ball spinning in your mind and in your soul because you're spending all kinds of emotional energy, time, or even financial resources, throwing it at this thing, it might be and maybe probably is an idol. It's a god. And it's a false god. And it has to be killed. That's what this story is about. This story is for you, if you have an idol in your life. And I would say we do.

God is making a memory in this about His greatness so that we will put down or kill some idol in our life and become more faithful to who He is and what He's like. His name is YHWH. "Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice?"

The Ten Plagues

Exodus 10:1-2

Then YHWH said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them² that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am YHWH.”

In Exodus chapter 10 it says, “Then YHWH said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of the officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them that you may tell your children and grandchildren’” – and people at Grace Covenant Church right now – “ ‘how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am YHWH.’”

That Israel will know, that Egypt will know, that all the world would know.

Plague #1: The Nile River

I’m going to look very quickly at some of the ten plagues because I want to point out to you that that’s how God is doing that, and how God is showing us His attributes in these plagues. The first plague is the plague of the Nile River. Now you have to know that the Nile River – this plague itself serves as a nice template for what God’s doing and how He’s doing it – the Nile River is a high god in the world of the Egyptians. Plutarch said the Nile River is the “Father and Savior of Egypt.” There is nothing like the honor that the Egyptians give the Nile River. They say it is through the Nile River that the gods are birthed. As a matter of fact, it says, not just being the source of prosperity and of life – it is the center of devotion. It is called in those times the bloodstream of Osiris, one of the great gods --- the bloodstream of Osiris.

And God says, *I can use that. Let’s do that. Let’s make it a bloodstream.* And so, as the story goes – many of you know that – Aaron comes out and touches his rod into the Nile River

and it turns to blood, meaning death. All things in the Nile River die. Now the source of great life and prosperity for Egypt is death. He's taking away their hope. He's destroyed a false god.

"Who is YHWH that I should listen to His voice and obey Him?"

Plague #2: Frogs

The second plague, the frogs, are flushed from the river, and now the second plague is this plague of frogs. The frogs are now coming. Keep in mind, in this case it's a goddess of fertility. And these frogs were considered by the farmers, when they would sing and croak, it would be the song of prosperity. Friends, they are not liking this song. It is overplayed. It says that they are overwhelmed with frogs. They are everywhere in every context. And they are goddesses and so they can't harm them in any way. If you killed a frog, you could be killed.

Exodus 8:8-10

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to YHWH to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to YHWH." ⁹ Moses said to Pharaoh, "I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile."

¹⁰ "Tomorrow," Pharaoh said.

And so, as the frogs are taking over Egypt, Pharaoh in chapter 8, verse 8: "Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Pray to YHWH to take these frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to YHWH.' So, Moses said to Pharaoh, 'I'll leave you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of these frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.' Pharaoh says, 'Okay, tomorrow.'"

God is mocking -- Moses and Pharaoh, while this is going on, He's mocking him. He's saying, *Okay, had enough of frogs? Sure, okay. So I'll let you make the appointment. I'll put it down in God's calendar. When do you want the frogs gone? Tomorrow? How about noon? Okay, we'll do that.*

Exodus 8:13-15

And the LORD did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses, in the courtyards and in the fields. ¹⁴ They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them. ¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as YHWH had said.

And then verse 13 – be careful what you ask for. “And YHWH did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses and in the courtyards and in the fields. They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them.” And the land reeked of them – can you imagine in the front yard of every house is a ten-foot pile of dead frogs? And in the back, there’s another ten-foot pile. On every street corner there are piles of piles, a hundred feet. This is Egypt, the summer. How’s that smelling? It reeked.

Did anyone see *1917*? A beautiful movie. You have to see that movie on the big screen – leave the kids at home. It is as much as you can take, as many senses as you can take, of what World War I trench warfare must have looked like. And the only sense that they wanted to bring to us but couldn’t is the sense of smell of rotting flesh. It is pungent. And so, they do that with gnats flying and there’s a line in there – “If you get lost, just follow the pungent stench back. That’s how you’ll find your way back.”

That’s the smell here. And so, it says, “But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses or Aaron, just as YHWH had said it would happen.”

Plagues #3 and #4: Gnats and Flies

And so gnats follow the death. And what follows gnats, but now flies. Flies are everywhere. And I want you to see that things change in the plagues. In this fourth plague of flies it says, “Then YHWH says to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh and say this. YHWH says, “Let my people go, so that they might worship me. If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies over you and over all your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of Egypt will be full of flies, and even the ground where they are.”””

Exodus 8:22-23

“But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, YHWH, am in this land. ²³ I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow.”

But look what He says. This is how it's different. He says, “ ‘But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, YHWH, am in this land. I will make a distinction’ ” – there's the word “redemption” again – “ ‘between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow.’ ”

He's mocking them again. These flies – if you think they're the nuanced flies that are kind of trapped on your screens trying to get out, it's not that kind of fly. It is Corpus Christi northeast horsefly. Not the flies that land on you and bother you while you are eating. They are the ones who land on you and tear into you as they eat you. They are carnivorous. If you've been bitten by one of these horseflies, you wish you had been bitten by a mosquito or a wasp. They tear your flesh. And that's what's happening. And they are everywhere all the time except with the Israelis.

And so, if you can imagine, Pharaoh gets tired of this and calls Moses and Aaron back. And in that throne room where it's almost too dense to see through with all of these flies, picture this: Aaron and Moses not touched by a single fly. It's like they have Off or some kind of repellent running through their circulatory system and they just look at Pharaoh and his boys and they're slapping their whelps and maybe infections and they just say, *What's up? Heard you guys got a fly thing here --- I don't know – it's good in Goshen.* See the mockery? He's calling them out.

Exodus 8:24

And YHWH did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials, and throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies.

“And then YHWH did this. The dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the house of his officials, and throughout Egypt and the land was ruined by the flies.”

Exodus 8:25

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.”

Verse 25: “And then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, ‘Go sacrifice to your God here in the land.’” *Just get out of here.*

See how He's showing off? He's showing off His power, He's introducing himself as YHWH. Who is YHWH that I should obey Him? That's the question, here's the answer. He is our creator. And if you see what's happening here is that God is causing the first plague to take place with the Nile River and then He's just backing away, just letting nature take its course; just lets chaos ensue. God designed, He builds and maintains all of His creation --- designs, builds, and maintains. And when we say we want no part of God, what's being on display here is fine. You step away from God, you step away from His protection of us. In the second law of thermodynamics we are approaching chaos much quicker than we had thought. He just lets go.

Why should we obey Him? Because He knows the design of our bodies physically. He knows what's good for that. He knows the makeup of our emotional well-being. He knows the sociological gears that must take place to have a healthy society. He knows the spiritual laws. He wrote the spiritual laws. And so, when God says, *Look, I need to be king*, He doesn't say, *I am king and I should be king because I want to be in charge, I'm the boss*. He's saying, *I'm the king because you should trust in my wisdom. I'm your maker. I designed you, I made you, I maintain you.*

The laws of God, the decrees that we receive from Him --- friends, they're gifts. They are gifts. The first commandment: "I am YHWH, you shall have no other gods before me." *Thank You, God, thanks for that help.*

This one right here, cut in the glass. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind." Why would He say that? Because it's true. It's the only way that works. He's trying to help us, He's trying to give us the answer key. And that's what He's showing in these first few plagues.

If you run from God and want nothing to do with Him --- *Who is YHWH that I should obey Him?* --- it's not like He goes, *Boom! You get a car wreck! You get an ulcer! You get a divorce!* That's not how it happens. He saying this: you harvest what you plant. And if you say your work is more important than your intimacy with God, it's okay. You just made a step towards chaos. And when your god becomes work then you're going to overwork. And in that overworking you're going to over-worry. There's your chaos. There's your emotional chaos. If you do that long enough you'll have family chaos. There's your divorce. If you continue long enough you'll have physical chaos. There's your ulcer. He didn't do this to you; He tried to prevent it from happening: "You should have no other gods before me." If you do, they'll destroy you. Idols destroy us.

God gives us a decree: forgive those who sin against you. We say, *Okay, but I'm justified. I'm holding on to it. I want to see justice happen in my terms and in my time.* He said, *No, don't do this. I know the way your soul is made.* And we hold onto that and guess what happens? We approach chaos. He doesn't give us a root canal for that, for rejecting His orders here. But what does happen is that we become embittered. We get relational chaos. We certainly get chaos to that person. But what usually happens is we say, *I'm never going to feel that sort of thing again,* and we say, *I'm going to be self-protective. I'm not going to let that happen again.* So, we become shorter in our grace with other people, because we're holding onto this need for justification. But if you do what He says and give forgiveness, whether people want it or not or earned it or not, you find yourself freer. You become a forgiving person. You become like God wants you to become.

Our idols destroy us. And God alone completes us. And so, God says, "You shall have no other gods before me. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind." It's medicine, friends. It is medicine for our bodies, souls, and spirits. It is just pages torn out of the

owner's manual for us. And we can see that in these plagues because God just says, "Here it is. This is what you want. You want chaos. It's coming your way."

When a person is finally surrendered to the lordship of YHWH they are finally on their way to become fully alive. When Christ is king, you're living outside of chaos and you're approaching redemption.

The second reason this storyline tells us -- "Who is YHWH and why should I obey His voice?" -- is this. He is our Savior and is looking forward to our repentance. Watch this. It's easy to miss.

Plague #7: Hail

The seventh plague is the plague of hail. And this hailstorm -- again, this is not a natural sort of thing, a natural disaster, but it's not just following the chaos that's happening -- He's going to add -- watch what He's doing.

Exodus 9:13-14

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what YHWH, the God of the Hebrews, says: "Let my people go, so that they may worship me, ¹⁴or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth."

"Then YHWH said to Moses, 'Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say this to him, "This is what YHWH, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'Let my people go, so that they might worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and against your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.'""

God Doesn't Act Suddenly

But He doesn't do it suddenly. Look what He does. He delays this. And this is the seventh plague, by the way.

Exodus 9:15

“ ‘For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. ¹⁶ But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’”

And so, verse 15 says, “ ‘ ‘For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the face of the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all of the earth.’””

God is saying, *Look, this is the seventh plague and I could have done this in one.* Can you imagine writing this script if you were in charge of this? Our client is YHWH God.

Great, what do you want to show?

I want to show that I am the Creator, designer, and the maintainer of all things.

Great, give me three minutes. That’s all you’ll need for this movie.

Moses confronts Pharaoh and says, “Let my people go.” Pharaoh says, “Who is YHWH that I should obey Him?” Zing, zing. Both of His two guys – pillars of salt.

I’m not so sure I should obey Him – everybody breaks out in spontaneous combustion, flame out.

All right, Pharaoh, I’m counting down from five. I’m going to snap my fingers – it’s like a movie – *I’m going to snap my fingers and every Egyptian will be dead. Four, three, two ... Okay, I’ll go.*

That’s it. The whole thing takes three and a half minutes. That’s what God could do. That’s not what He wants to do.

He’s being patient. Why would God be so patient? Why ten plagues? Why does He do it this way?

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Bible memory verse, 2 Peter 3:9 says this: “And the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you” – you, me – “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” He’s going slow then like He goes slow now. He wants as many people to come to repentance as possible.

God Doesn’t Act without Warning

Not just that He’s taking a long time with this, but He’s actually giving a warning. Why should we obey YHWH? Because He is our Savior and wants everyone to repent.

Exodus 9:18-21

“ ‘Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. ¹⁹ Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.’” ²⁰ Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of YHWH hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. ²¹ But those who ignored the word of YHWH left their slaves and livestock in the field.

Verse 18, He tells them: “Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen upon Egypt, from the day it was founded till now.” And so, He tells Pharaoh and his leaders, “Give an order to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.”

And so, some of the “officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of YHWH hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of YHWH left their slaves and livestock in the field.” And they died.

God is saying in these plagues, *Look, you don't have to suffer. What I'm trying to do is I'm trying to show you that your rock bottom can be as far down as you want it to be. You don't have to go all the way down. Look at others who have gone down those paths before you and repent.* These plagues are plagues of judgment, sure, but they're also plagues of you don't have to suffer. They're plagues of bringing people to a place where they will repent. He's not out to kill everyone; He's out to just tap them out and have them surrender so that they might enjoy making Him their king. He did this so He could save all of the Hebrews. Sure. That says it. He did that to save the billions and billions of people over thousands of years that will know this story and say, “You know what? Following YHWH and listening to His voice is the easiest way to live.” He did it to save these Egyptians. Some of these Egyptians were saved.

When you look at this passage and you wonder who is YHWH that I should obey His voice, it's because He's our Savior. It's because He is looking forward to us repenting. He's making memories with all of His creation, showing off His power and His strength. He does that. That's His pattern. He makes these big productions so that we'll remember them – about His power and His desire to see us repent.

Look at the crucifixion story, right? Jesus dies and then is raised again. Simple. It doesn't have to be as complicated as it is. The crucifixion itself – if all that is needed is the death of Jesus, and that's true --- but look at the details. It takes about a whole day of torture for Jesus to endure this. And it's in public. And it's in a parade where He's dragging His cross through Jerusalem. And then He's placed on this place where everyone can see Him. And then He's put into a tomb where this giant stone is rolled in front of it. And the tomb has a guard in front of it, a Roman guard. Why all of that? He's showing off. He's just showing off, in part, so that all the believers at the time would say, *Wow. He didn't get over just any death – He got over crucifixion from a tomb that was guarded by Romans.* He did it so that the Romans that were part of this could say, *Oh, no, I was there. He was dead. We put Him in a cave and sealed it.* He did that, all that flexing, so that you and I could look back at that event and say, “Oh, it happened.” He designed, makes, and maintains all of creation. And He just blew right through that event.

YHWH – we knew Him as God Almighty. He’s saying, *Let me introduce you to my real name – YHWH. How do you like me now? I am YHWH. Obey my voice.* And why wouldn’t we?

Moses’ Faith Grows

I’m almost out of time. Real quick, here’s a fun thing that happens in this story. It’s kind of simple. Sometimes it’s easy to miss. But what happens to Moses in this story? This is what happens when you experience living by faith.

Exodus 6:28

Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt, He said to him, “I am YHWH. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you.”

Exodus 6:30

But Moses said to the LORD, “Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?”

Moses starts the story with the plagues like this. This is in chapter 6, verse 28: “And then when YHWH spoke to Moses in Egypt, He said to him, ‘I am YHWH. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I’m about to tell you.’” Here’s Moses again, doing it again for about the fourth time now: “And Moses said to YHWH, ‘Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?’” That’s how he starts. And God says, *Look, you know what? I’ll give you your big brother, Aaron, as training wheels.* That’s how this ministry of Moses starts.

So the first three plagues, I think, are Aaron’s rod --- “Aaron’s rod, Aaron’s rod, Aaron’s rod.” Those middle plagues are “And then the hand of God did thus and such.” The last four plagues, it says, “And the hand of Moses did this ...” The last confrontation with Pharaoh, it’s Moses and Pharaoh, and Pharaoh says, *You get out of this town. I swear if I see you again, I’ll kill you.* And Moses is saying, *Let’s go. Let’s go.* That’s how it ends.

Something’s happened in Moses’ life. His faith grew by living the experience of living the ministry God had for him. And yeah, he starts off so scared he needed his big brother to

come with him. And you know what, God says, *Okay*. But he lives through these plagues, these demonstrations of God's design and making and maintenance of all of creation. And in that, he just grew into this courageous lion that we know Moses to be. That's our story. It can be our story. I'm just the pastor, right? You guys are the ministers. God has a ministry for all of you. God put you here now for this very purpose, that you would know YHWH and would obey His voice.

So, whether you're in the classroom, and I know it can be very scary in a classroom to stand up for God, you feel like everybody's looking at you and laughing, maybe because they are – okay. Locker room or hallways – worse still. The workplace --- just to say this sentence: “Hey, maybe my wife and I could pray for you.” It could stop the clocks in there. But you know what? You do that. You start off like a little kid, needing the training wheels, but here's the point in ministry. You've got to do it. If you do it, you see God do great big things. And then when you see God do great big things, you get a little bit bolder. And then you see Him do great big things and little bit bolder. Because God isn't changing – you are. You might have known Him as God Almighty, but He's saying, *I am YHWH. Obey my voice.*

So, yeah, it seems like you're like a little kid facing down a whole army. What you're really doing is you're a little kid facing down an army and YHWH is standing behind you. That's ministry. That's the pattern. But look at Moses – your faith is like a muscle. If you don't use it, you lose it. If you do use it, it gets stronger. It's like a foreign language to you. If you don't use it, it goes away. If you say, “Oh, I'm going to trust God,” but not do anything --- you have to trust God and do something. And in that doing something, God shows up and says, “I am YHWH.” *How do you like me now?*

This section of Exodus is the formal introduction to God Almighty. His name is YHWH. And He wants you to live the courageous life that Moses got to enjoy. He put on that spectacular display of power so that we would have a memory that is unforgettable, and we bring that memory into the ministry that God has given us here and now. Be encouraged. YHWH is our God.

Let's pray.

Lord, first I'd like Your Spirit to help us understand maybe where we have an idol. Let's just start there --- something that we've made more important than You, something we trust

ourselves with and not You, something good, like a child or a career or ambition. But it started off from You and now ... So, Lord, I'd ask that You would call that to our minds so that we might repent of that idol worship; that You might pry that away from us; that we might worship You as the only God, because You are the only God.

Lord, I'd ask that You would reveal yourself to us in our lives as we practice living by faith as ministers in this city. You are YHWH. I'd ask, Lord, that You would give us this week, a step of faith so that we might see You as the designer and the maker and the maintainer of all things. Lord, let us be a people of courage, of compassion, of service, of truth. Who do you serve? We serve YHWH. We listen to His voice and obey. It's the easiest thing to do. We pray this in Jesus' name. And everybody said ... Amen.

