

God Leaves No Doubt

When we left Moses he was standing awestruck before God, the great "I AM." It must have been as difficult for Moses as it is for most of us to grasp the significance of this disclosure for he went to great lengths to excuse himself from the mission God set before him. We will soon see that in both the call to Moses for service and the confrontation with Pharaoh, it is useless to resist God's will. Nevertheless, Moses's fear prevailed as he continued to propose why he should not go to Egypt.

We have seen previously that Moses suggested that ignorance of God's name might excuse Him from this task. Failing to succeed with that, he proposed that he was unqualified to go before Pharaoh, raised the question of what could be done if his brethren did not believe him, and argued that he lacked the eloquence of speech to be given this responsibility. God parries the first objection by ignoring it, simply stating that He would be with Moses. Regarding the second God produced marvelous signs, turning Moses's staff into a serpent and back again, as well as his hand leprous and back immediately to healthy flesh. As for the third, God reminded Moses who made man's mouth. He would supply Moses with all the eloquence that he needed. With all objections being answered, Moses had only one option remaining, begging. In one last desperate plea he asked that God send someone else, anyone else; anyone at all as long as it was not him. The discussion abruptly ended when God's anger was aroused. Except God directed that Aaron should accompany Moses as his spokesperson, the arrangement was set as originally proposed.

When Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh with God's edict to let His people Israel go, Pharaoh answered, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go (Exodus 5:2)." Pharaoh was half right. He did not know the Lord, but he would surely let Israel go. Unfortunately for all of Egypt, it would take a hard lesson before Pharaoh would submit. Pharaoh's immediate response to God's edict was to lay an even heavier burden upon Israel. Israel wilted under the oppressive demands and cried out that Moses "made them stink in the sight of Pharaoh (Ex. 5:21 ESV)." Hearing Israel's groaning (6:5) and declaring that Moses would be as God to Pharaoh with Aaron acting as his prophet (7:1), God sends them a second time to the Egyptian monarch knowing that the demands would again be spurned. As predicted, "Pharaoh's heart grew hard and he did not heed them (7:13)," rejecting God's demands a second time.

God responded with a series of plagues, the first of which was that all water in Egypt would be turned to blood. This is followed by plagues of frogs, lice, flies, diseased livestock, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness. After each of the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart, making a total of seven times in succession that he refused to obey God. In the ancient Hebrew culture, the number seven was a sacred number and conveyed in many instances the idea of completeness. These seven rejections represent the fullness of Pharaoh's rebellion. From this point forward, even when Pharaoh declares his repentance, having rebelled

beyond God's mercy, God hardens Pharaoh's heart for him until the fullness of His point is made. The full force of all the plagues must now fall upon Pharaoh and Egypt in order that "the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord (Exodus 7:5)."

God delivered a final affliction upon Egypt which brought Pharaoh to his knees, the death to all the firstborn in Egypt. As the Scriptures record, "And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first born of livestock... there was not a house where there was not one dead (Ex. 12:29-30)." Pharaoh was now fully vanquished and he called for Moses to take Israel from the land (Ex. 12:31), and all of Egypt urged them to go in haste for fear that they should all end up dead (Ex. 12:33). Thus, Israel was released from bondage by the mighty hand of Jehovah God.

We have seen that Moses attempted to avoid his commission from God, but could not escape His will. Pharaoh attempted to defy God's sovereignty, but was humbled. God had declared that Pharaoh was raised up "that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth (Ex. 9:16)." God accomplished His purpose in both Moses and Pharaoh, and, in so doing, to Moses, to Israel, to Pharaoh, and to all the world, then and forever, He left no doubt that He is God.

[Read Exodus 12:1-20; Mt. 26:26-30; 1Cor. 11:23-26]