

Bible Study # 11 Exodus 7.1–13 02–19–2021

How graciously God dealt with his servant Moses! He informed him that he was to be like God to Pharaoh, while his brother Aaron occupied the office of prophet (see comments on 4:14-17). I don't know of any other person than Moses, who as was made like God to other humans. This does not say that God would somehow make Moses part divine and part human. That would be true for all people, not just Aaron and Pharaoh.

It simply meant that God would put into those two an attitude that made them respond to Moses in a way similar to God. That is why Aaron could view Moses favorably and the Pharaoh viewed him negatively. This pattern is most important for the way in which the prophets operated in the Old Testament times. Their ministry was structured on that of Moses and Aaron. Divine revelation was communicated to chosen servants.

Moses was given no choice in regard to his message. It was to be everything that the Lord commanded. There is no discernible difference between the expressions 'everything I command you' and 'everything I tell you' (6:29). Revelation had to be transmitted in its entirety. Once more the central theme of the message is reiterated. Pharaoh had to be brought to the realization that he had to let the Israelites leave Egypt.

Once more Moses is told that God would sovereignly harden Pharaoh's heart, something already stated back in 4:21. There is a change here in that a different verb is used to denote 'hardening'. No discernible difference in meaning occurs between these two verbs, or the other verb for 'hardening' that is also used in Exodus 4-14.

From the outset, Pharaoh's heart was set against the Israelites, but God's actions towards him were judicial in order to demonstrate that the exodus was solely dependent upon divine power. The same duality was apparent in the death of Christ, for though it was part of God's 'set purpose and foreknowledge', yet those who crucified Him were guilty of putting Him to death (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).

Multiplication of 'signs and wonders' was not going to change Pharaoh's heart; he would refuse to listen to Moses and Aaron. All the plagues were to be called 'signs', while 'judgments' point to them as judicial acts. The actual exodus would take place because of 'mighty acts of judgment' that God would execute when He laid his hand on Egypt. These were clearly events synonymous with 'miraculous signs and wonders'.

God's concern was for His people, the Israelites, whom He now designates as His 'divisions' (remember yesterday's comment on them). The message was that the Israelites would leave Egypt as an organized body, going out in military formation.

It was not just the Israelites who were to be convinced by the redemption from Egypt by God's 'outstretched arm' and 'mighty acts of judgment' (6:6-7), but also the Egyptians. Recognition of the redeeming God as 'the Lord' was to be the outcome of the judgment on Egypt and the bringing of the Israelites out from there. This statement needs to be set over against Pharaoh's assertion that he did not know the Lord (5:2).

The subsequent events of the exodus were aimed at convincing the taskmasters in Egypt that their gods were mere vanities without any claim to reality, whereas the God of their slaves was living and powerful. Now attention falls once more on Moses and Aaron as chosen servants and messengers. What had been commanded of them, that they did.

The Hebrew Text is even more definite and emphatic than some translations. The ESV nail it saying: 'Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the Lord commanded them'. Their actions were demonstrations of complete obedience to God's directions.

The respective ages of Moses and Aaron are provided for us. Moses, the second born, was eighty years of age, while Aaron was eighty-three years old. No mention is made in Exodus of any danger to the children at the time of Aaron's birth, so presumably the decree was issued shortly before the birth of Moses (see 1:22).

Before the other varied signs came, another incident with Moses' staff took place (for the previous one, see 4:1-5). While verses 9 and 10 seem to imply that it was Aaron's staff, yet verses 10-18 make it clear that it was Moses' staff that was involved, since reference is made back to the fact that it had been changed into a snake (7:15).

The context suggests it forms the first of eleven sequential demonstrations of God's wonders. Implicit in the text is a command to Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh. When he would issue a challenge to them by demanding a miracle, (or in Hebrew, 'a portent'), Moses would follow the Lord's direction and got Aaron to throw his staff down on the ground so that it could become a snake.

Following the divine directions, both men went into the presence of Pharaoh, where the predicted incident took place. The staff indeed became a snake. The word used here for 'snake' is not the usual one, but a word often translated as 'great sea creature' (Gen. 1:21; Ps. 148:7), but here seems to be used as a synonym for snake.

On seeing what happened, Pharaoh called for his 'wise men and sorcerers'). The first of these terms is a general word for 'wise men', while the second, which occurs in this form only five times in the Old Testament and denotes those who practice sorcery, a practice forbidden in Israel (Deut. 18:10). They are also called 'Egyptian magicians'.

They did the same things according to their 'mysterious lore', a term coming from a root that indicates 'wrapping up' or 'covering completely'. Each of the Egyptians threw his staff on the ground, and they became snakes. Then Aaron's staff 'swallowed' these snakes.

No explanation is given in the text as to how the magicians achieved their duplication of the miracle, whether by some illusory trick, or whether it was a genuine transformation of the sticks by satanic power. Similarly, the reference to the swallowing of the snakes by the one that came from Moses' stick carries no further elaboration.

Rather than Pharaoh having his heart changed, he hardened his heart further, refusing to listen to Moses and Aaron even as the Lord had said. Even miracles do not by themselves change hearts set against God (cf. Ps. 78:12-17; John 10:25).

Next Study: Exodus 7:14-25.