

Exodus 5:22-7:5 The Revelation from God

Introduction

Moses has honoured the Lord by stepping up to the plate and carrying out the first part of the work God has given him to do. However, in his haste to accomplish the Lord's work his manner towards Pharaoh was less respectful than it should have been. It came across to Pharaoh as a demand not a polite request and it was not only refused but a draconian punishment was imposed on the Israelites as a result of this confrontation. What was not understood very clearly is that there were examples of slaves in Egyptian being allowed a day or a few days off to worship their god or gods, and as was mentioned in the previous message an amazing example of a two week break being granted on one occasion. It is perfectly possible that had Moses gone about his legitimate calling more graciously and humbly that he might on this occasion have come away with a more successful outcome or at least avoided the draconian sanctions being imposed upon his people. There is no doubt that Pharaoh would decline indefinitely any request for the slaves being set free to go to their homeland, but that was not being sought at this stage. What has happened here is that Moses in his enthusiasm to accomplish the task in hand as he is getting older has failed to exercise sufficient patience in trusting God to see that this work is accomplished in His time. It is likely that Moses took some time in Midian to come to accept God's call to return to Egypt and lead the people of Israel. He likewise needed to allow Pharaoh and the other people with whom he was interacting to process the information he was bringing so that the appropriate action could be taken.

In our own day the same kind of issue and difficulty can arise. We can see that something needs to be done and having processed it ourselves are ready to move forward, but in a social context in a family or church family, a workplace or some other similar context we have to allow other people to work through the information before us in the time needed to ensure confidence in going forward together to accomplish the agreed goals- whatever they may be. The difficulty here is that what is a reasonable time for one person is too long a time or too short a time for someone else. It is a judgement issue not a 'right or wrong' kind of scenario in view. Many of us as we reflect over our lives will recall times when we were in too much of a hurry to get something done and failed to take other people with us as we should have done, but we couldn't see it at the time. Had we taken a little more time in the short-term it would have saved a fair bit of time and effort over the longer-term. However, it takes personal humility to admit that our zeal to accomplish a necessary goal has been in some degree detrimental to its accomplishment as we failed to address the concerns of others along the way. As parents or older children; as work colleagues; or as fellow members of the church there are times when we need to stop and reflect on things and take the necessary time to work through the things that others see as important. Moses was the qualified person to lead Israel at that time –there was no doubt about that. God had called him to that post. However, despite his age and maturity he needed to develop further his inter-personal skills to communicate more effectively with Pharaoh, but also to take the necessary time to work with fellow Israelites to take them on the journey with him as they started out on the long road to the Promised Land.

1. Remonstrating with God (Exodus 5:22-23)

²² *Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why You sent me?'* ²³ *Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and You have not rescued your people at all.'* (Exodus 5:22-23) *Why, Lord...* Life is full of these kinds of questions. All of us have faced and will face unexpected trials and heartaches along the journey of life. Sometimes we can see how particular circumstances have arisen, but at other times we simply are confused about how we came to be in a particular predicament. What is important to note here is that the presence of trials and difficulties may simply be part of living in a fallen and sinful world. Human beings, approximately seven billion of us, make choices and our choices have a significant impact on the lives of others around us for better or for worse. You or I may go through the most difficult of times without having done anything wrong it is sometimes simply a combination of unfortunate circumstances. There are other times when our words or actions have contributed to or even caused our difficulties, but this is not necessarily the case. In this case of Moses, his unnecessarily directive choice of words to Pharaoh on his first meeting with him (Exodus 5:1-2: *Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "Let My people go, so that they may hold a festival to Me in the wilderness."'*) ² *Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.'*) had got Pharaoh's back up and resulted in an unexpectedly severe negative response. Then he had increased the pressure in the situation by adding to God's Words in Exodus 5:3... *or He may strike us with plagues or with the sword.* Here was a glimpse of the younger Moses who relied on his gifting and wisdom to get things done quickly. God wanted to use Moses here, but he had to do things in God's way and not seek to force things through at a quicker pace. His failure to take care of the smaller details of what God asked him to do made it a rougher time at this stage than it needed to have been. His circumstances can so easily be mirrored and understood in many life settings in each generation. It is wise for all of us not only to do the right thing but to do it in the best way we can.

Moses here had been called by God to do a particular work that involved meeting with Pharaoh and making this request. What he did was in line with his calling. The skills he possessed together with his calling were not in doubt. We must commend Moses throughout this process for not downing his tools and insisting someone else do this work. There must have been a huge temptation to do that in his disappointment and his tears. Yet there is no hint that he ever seriously contemplated this option. Paul in his final letter to Timothy, the relatively young pastor of the Church in Ephesus, wrote these words of fatherly advice: *Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ* (II Timothy 2:3). To the Corinthian Church to whom he had often been called to give firm advice, Paul wrote these words of strong encouragement to perseverance in I Corinthians 15:58: *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.* The wise Christian man or woman will never say 'my way or the highway'! It was a very painful time for Moses as he sought to process the difficulties Israel was now in following his meeting with the Pharaoh. On the pathway of obedience we will face trials and cannot avoid them. William Carey's wife Dorothy had very poor mental and emotional health. With family and friends around her in the UK she managed fairly well to cope with daily life, but on the mission-field in India it was a profoundly sad situation. She clearly had a serious mental breakdown and was confined to her home. William, meanwhile, was accomplishing the most extraordinary feats in establishing the new Christian mission work in India, despite a hostile

British East India Company that ruled India and an adverse climate, together with a very small team of workers. He must in his private prayer life have cried to the Lord about his wife's predicament. His public utterances of trusting in the sovereignty of God are inspirational, but as a human being seeing his beloved wife in such distress must have caused heartache known only to him and the Lord. On another occasion a fire swept through the premises where many years worth of studies and Indian language Bible translations were housed, destroying the precious labours of this small group of missionaries. Yet a similar response with reference to the providence of God was uttered by William as he and his colleagues started from scratch on some of these literary projects. However, their misfortune was relayed across the United Kingdom and more Christians than ever before heard about their wonderful work. As a result the financial collections raised were astonishingly high and from across a range of denominational networks, especially in Scotland. Andrew Fuller, a Baptist pastor and mission secretary, was astonished on his tours into Scotland to see crowds sometimes numbering into the thousands turn up for a missionary meeting. The difficulties in the end actually resulted in even greater blessings for the mission work in Bengal, but at the time they would have been less than human not to want to cry out their anguish to the Lord.

It is most important for us when we face difficulties to react in a mature Christian way. We must bring things to the Lord and focus on seeking His strength and guidance in our prayers as Moses does here. Too often we can attempt to do God's work in our own strength and using our own abilities while unintentionally not relying on the Holy Spirit to aid and uphold us in exercising our calling. Moses had been told by God that things would get worse before the deliverance from Egypt would take place. However, it is likely that he had not truly grasped the implications of this revelation. He was the right person doing the right job, but it would take longer than he had allowed for and he needed to exercise patience to trust God to see the work accomplished in His time. Is there a context where I need to exercise patience and greater humility in this coming week?

2. The Revelation from God (Exodus 6:1-5)

*Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: because of My mighty hand he will let them go; because of My mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.'*² *God also said to Moses, 'I am the Lord.'*³ *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name the Lord I did not make Myself known to them.*⁴ *I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners.*⁵ *Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant* (Exodus 6:1-5). I have mentioned on other occasions how in the Old Testament era new steps forward amongst the people of God were often accompanied by a particular revelation of God's character revealed through a declaration concerning His identity. This passage in Exodus 6 following on from Exodus 3 is probably the most significant of these moments in the Old Testament.

(a) **The past** (Exodus 6:2-3a) *God also said to Moses, 'I am the Lord.'*³ *I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty...* The name **highlighted** from the past was El Shaddai – *God Almighty* The One who at particular moments in their history gave particular blessings to their ancestors in a time of need. In Genesis 17:1-2: *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me faithfully and be blameless.'*² *Then I will make My covenant between Me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.'* What was the particular blessing on this occasion? It was the establishment of an everlasting covenant between

God and Abraham and his descendants. The sign of the covenant would be the circumcision of each male child on the eighth day after birth as a public declaration of their entry into the community. For Abram (meaning ‘exalted Father’) there was a name change to Abraham (meaning ‘Father of many’); and in a context where Abraham and Sarai his wife had been unable to conceive a single child together; the **clear message** was that God could accomplish what for human beings was practically impossible. The use of that name El Shaddai in Isaac’s life occurs in Genesis 28:3 in the context of a prayer of blessing on his younger single son Jacob before he left to live with Rebekah’s family in Syria. *May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.⁴ May He give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.* Jacob I cannot see how this will work out for you but God can accomplish what needs to be done. The third use of El Shaddai to highlight is in Genesis 35:9-12: *After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram [Syria], God appeared to him again and blessed him.¹⁰ God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.’ So He named him Israel.¹¹ And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.¹² The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.* God **reaffirms** the humanly improbable declaration that this land would belong to the descendants of Abraham. Why the change here? Because in the lifetime of a small number of these Israelite people, the promise would turn into a possession under the later leadership of Joshua, Moses’ successor; Faith would become sight! Remember the aged Joshua’s words at the end of his life in Joshua 23:14b: *You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.* The emphasis in the past was God saying trust Me this will happen! There are times when we need to claim that revelation as well because we know God is trustworthy, but we cannot see the physical evidence of the promises being kept. What God promises He delivers – do you need that encouragement today?

(b) **The Present** (Exodus 6:3b-5) *but by My name the Lord I did not make Myself known to them.⁴ I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners.⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant.* The name ‘Yahweh’ (*the Lord*) was known in previous years to each of the patriarchs, but it was not the dominant or most prominent revelation of God’s identity to them. In Genesis 13:14-17 after the disputes over land between Abram’s herdsmen and those of his nephew Lot, the aged patriarch willingly allowed the younger man to have first choice on the best land in the region for his animals. In that encounter God as Yahweh reminded Abraham that in the future his descendants would possess all this land. But it was a hint of future blessings not a present reality. In Genesis 26:1-6, in a time of famine, Isaac was tempted to emigrate to Egypt but God as Yahweh reminded him that He would keep His promise about the land – but it was a future blessing not a present reality. In Genesis 32:9 the youngest of the trio of patriarchs commits to going back to an uncertain future in Canaan. Notice how he prays: *Then Jacob prayed, ‘O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me, “Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper ... a promise of future reality, but I claim it today and will return to Canaan.* However, in Exodus 6 the situation has changed because the past is now becoming the present when the promises will be fulfilled. God in covenant with His people is about to deliver what He has promised generations earlier. Hallelujah! Hebrews 11:13a expressed the patriarch’s situation so clearly: *All these people were still living by faith when they*

died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. For the patriarchs the emphasis was on trust in God Almighty who keeps His promises –as the dying Jacob emphasized to his beloved son Joseph (Genesis 48:4). Exodus 6:5 was the reassurance the suffering Israelites needed to hear at that time: *Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant.* This is the hinge verse from the past to the present, from the God who can deliver and who will provide their inheritance to the God who will deliver to the people alive at that time. Some would see but a little glimpse of the fulfillment, others more and a few the full miraculous provision of God. In your life and mine as our anchor we need to hold firmly to God Almighty, El Shaddai, the God who keeps His promises. Yet we also have the even fuller new covenant relationship with God the Son, the Lord Jesus who entered our world to identify with us, model for us a way of living and give His life as a substitutionary sacrifice in our place. In Jesus we have the fullest revelation of God in fellowship with His people something so much richer than the blessings of the Israelites in Egypt. Do you know Him as your Lord and Saviour? Are you walking closely with Him to receive the spiritual inheritance and blessings He has for you?

3. **Reassurance from God** (Exodus 6:6-8)

The Future (Exodus 6:6-8) ⁶ *Therefore, say to the Israelites: “I am the Lord, 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 the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.* ⁸ *And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.”*” So what is it that God had in store in the near future for these people? Exodus 6:6-8 is God’s manifesto for what would happen over the next half century of His covenant people’s history. Political parties produce election manifestos but how much do they seriously intend to deliver should they gain election to office? It varies! This is what God promised and we read earlier Joshua’s assessment in Joshua 23:14 of its complete fulfillment. Here are seven promises: (a) **Deliverance from Egypt** (Exodus 6:6a) – they all would leave the country; the old life is history – we are God’s new creation when we belong to Him (II Corinthians 5:17); have you received your inheritance through Jesus? (b) **Freedom from slavery** (Exodus 6:6b) –emancipation for all! Are you free in Christ –II Corinthians 3:17: *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* Is there something you need to be set free from today? (c) **Redemption** (Exodus 6:6c) – the blood of the lamb at each Passover meal the wonderful reminder afresh of this deliverance. Jesus later would be the equivalent of our Passover lamb (I Corinthians 5:7b) whose precious blood redeemed us from our sins (I Peter 1:19); Have you received His forgiveness and the gift of salvation? (d) **Welcome into His family** (Exodus 6:7a) *I will take you as My own people...* This was an invitation to join a family not simply to follow a creed. They had clear convictions to guide them but owning the God who desired fellowship with them in a personal way meant a fuller richer relationship than they had ever experienced before. However, as Christians we have an even greater blessing as Jesus invited us to call God ‘Father’. He said: *This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven...* (Matthew 6:9-10); we are wanted children of God; He chose us and welcomes us into a relationship with Him. Other people may call us worthless and insignificant and think we are of no value. A person whom you can call them ‘Father’ views things very differently! Do you need to hear today how much you are loved and valued by God –your Father

in heaven? (e) **A personal relationship** (Exodus 6:7b) *I will be your God.* Has there been a time when you committed your life to Jesus? If not why not take that step today? (f) **Guaranteed resources** (Exodus 6:8a) *And I will bring you to the land...* What God had promised them; for us Paul declared with confidence: (Philippians 4:19) *And my God will meet **all your needs** according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.* Is there a need you need to bring to Him today? (g) **A personal inheritance** (Exodus 6:8b) *I will give it to you **as a possession** yours to keep!* We have a future inheritance too. Jesus said in John 14:1-3: *'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there **to prepare a place for you?** ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.* Have you received the title deeds by faith?

4. **Recommissioning by God** (Exodus 6:9-7:5)

(a) **The problem** (Exodus 6:9)⁹ *Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labour.* Will we allow the pain and heartaches of difficulties distract us from the blessings of believing and living in the light of His promises? The pain is real! But equally real are the promises of God!

(b) **The people** (Exodus 6:10-27)¹⁰ *Then the Lord said to Moses, ¹¹ 'Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.'* ¹² *But Moses said to the Lord, 'If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?'* ¹³ *Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, and He commanded them to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. ¹⁴ These were the heads of their families: The sons of Reuben the firstborn son of Israel were Hanok and Pallu, Hezron and Karmi. These were the clans of Reuben. ¹⁵ The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These were the clans of Simeon. ¹⁶ These were the names of the sons of Levi according to their records: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Levi lived 137 years. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon, by clans, were Libni and Shimei. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath lived 133 years. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of Levi according to their records. ²⁰ Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years. ²¹ The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg and Zikri. ²² The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan and Sithri. ²³ Aaron married Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ²⁴ The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph. These were the Korahite clans. ²⁵ Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These were the heads of the Levite families, clan by clan. ²⁶ **It was this Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, 'Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.'** ²⁷ *They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt – this same Moses and Aaron.* I called you to do this work – you whose names are in this genealogy! You are to undertake this work Moses and Aaron - you must not think of backing out because of the difficulties! Our calling is no different today. I Peter 2:9-10: *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* How many Christians miss out on the blessings of ministry because they quit discouraged and disheartened because of some difficulties they were facing. The blessings that were just around the corner were not received because they left their posts to which God had called them. Do you need to heed the call to perseverance through your trials today?*

(c) **The purpose** (Exodus 6:28-7:5) ²⁸ Now when the Lord spoke to Moses in Egypt, ²⁹ He said to him, 'I am the Lord. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you.' ³⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, 'Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?' Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. ² You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. ³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, ⁴ he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. ⁵ **And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord** when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.' (Exodus 6:9-7:5) Why? So that people may see something of the revelation of God in you and me; that they may see we have been with Jesus; that they may want to come to know Him too! In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul wrote: *And we all, who with unveiled faces **reflect the Lord's glory**, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.* May those around us see something of His likeness in you and me, for Jesus' sake Amen.