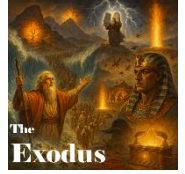




Let My People Go!
The Unfolding of God's Redemptive Agenda
Exodus 5:1-23
(Lesson #5)



Vs 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'"

After their (Moses and Aaron's) arrival in Egypt, after they had visited with the elders, after the people had rejoiced and worshipped God, because He had promised their deliverance from Pharaoh.

Afterwards, Moses and Aaron went in to the Pharaoh and they **said**.

For Moses and Aaron to do the will of God they had to speak. Their mission involved more than simply showing signs, more than casting down a staff, it involved speaking.

APPLICATION: The same is true for you and I, regardless of exactly what God has called us to do, He has **(for sure)** called us to open our mouths and tell others about Him and about how people can know Him!

Now as you consider Moses and Aaron arriving at the palace of the Pharaoh, **you are likely wondering which Pharaoh**, I am not going to **dive into that today**, we have that slated as **part of a larger discussion scheduled for October 15th**.

I will say this before I pass on over this topic, I believe the Pharaoh of the Exodus **can be identified**. I will **present the evidence and leave the final decision to you**.

We do know this for sure. This is not the same Pharaoh who was reigning when Moses fled from Egypt 40 years earlier. Following Moses fleeing to Egypt we read:

"During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God." (Ex 2:23 ESV)

"18 Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." 19 And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."'" (Ex 4:18-19 ESV)

There could have been more than one Pharaoh between the time that Moses fled Egypt and the time he returned, but the Scriptures are clear the one who wanted to kill Moses had died.

Now it is unclear who does the talking and Moses does not attempt to tell us, only to say **they went and said** to Pharaoh. **Thus says Yahweh...**

Now as you think about this, Moses and Aaron are presenting themselves before one of if not the most powerful man in the ancient world at that time. He is not simply the king of Egypt, he is viewed as a god by the Egyptians.

I have been hard on Moses, but this took real courage to march into Pharaoh's court and start making demands for Yahweh. It is noteworthy that they use **God's name**. They do not say thus says **God**, or the **Hebrew God**, but rather thus says **Yahweh**.

The Egyptians themselves served and worshipped a number of gods.

What I am about to say comes from Encyclopedia Britannica:

The gods and goddesses of Ancient Egypt were an integral part of the people's everyday lives for over 3,000 years. There were over 2,000 deities in the Egyptian pantheon, many whose names are well known - Isis, Osiris, Horus, Amun, Ra, Hathor, Bastet, Thoth, Anubis, and Ptah among others - but many more less so who were also important. The more famous gods became state deities while others were associated with a specific region or, in some cases, a ritual or role.

Keep in mind, that is over the **life of the nation**. Gods would come and gods would go. Tuck **this away**, for this is an important point that will develop when we get together to look at the archeology that supports the Exodus.

Scholars tell us that at this particular time the Egyptians worshiped around **80 gods**.

Pharaoh was familiar with many gods and he had likely heard about gods of other nations. But he is telling Moses and Aaron, I am not familiar with this god.

Moses and Aaron are talking about **Yahweh**, the GOD (singular) of the Hebrews.

They are talking about the true and living God. But Pharaoh, at this point, has no way to fully understand this. Although he will!

Much of the rest of the first part of Exodus is **teaching Pharaoh and Egypt about the LORD**, about **Yahweh!**

The message that Moses and Aaron deliver to the Pharaoh is Yahweh the God of the Hebrews says to you: **'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'**

Notice, when Moses said let my people go, he was not saying let my (Moses' people) go. Instead, he is speaking for Yahweh. The **nation of Israel is referred to as "my" God's people**.

Pharaoh saw this nation as his, God through Moses is setting the record straight, saying they are MY people.

Let them **MY PEOPLE** leave Egypt, proceed in the wilderness where **MY PEOPLE** will hold a **feast to Me**.

At this point, you might wonder which feast? The feast is not named, at up to this point God had not established any set feast days with the nation of Israel.

ONE QUICK NOTE: It is here, during this time, as recorded in the book of Leviticus, that God would establish **seven Feast days**. But that is all in the future.

At this point, Moses and Aaron, come to Pharaoh, and say for Yahweh, let my people go to hold a feast to Me. **A celebration**. That is the request from Yahweh through Moses.

God has sent his **two ambassadors** to Pharaoh to request that Pharaoh let the nation of Israel go, into the wilderness and hold a feast to their God.

Pharaoh, no doubt is put off by this for a number of reasons that we will see play out in the text.

Vs 2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt quickly responded: **Who is the LORD? Who is Yahweh**, I have **never heard of him**. **Who is He** that I should **obey him** and **let Israel go?**

I have never heard of him, I **do not know him**, and moreover, **I will not let Israel go!**

Now the reality is that before this is all over Pharaoh will know who the Lord is and more than that, he will let Israel go.

APPLICATION: The most important question you and I will ever face and ever answer is: Who is the Lord, who is Jesus? The answer to that question matters more than any other question we will answer.

But you see what is happening here, the most powerful man on the planet is saying I **know nothing about this god**, and more importantly, **I am not letting Israel go**. I am not obeying his voice!

For Pharaoh to obey the voice of what looked like to him just **another foreign god** is very unlikely without a **compelling reason to do so**.

Keep in mind the Pharaohs saw themselves as gods, so to release the Hebrews based on a demand of what he saw was just another foreign god **would show weakness**.

Remember point #4 of what Yahweh said to Moses at the burning bush:

"But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand." (Ex 3:19 ESV)

Pharaoh's response should in no way surprise Moses. In fact, he should have expected it.

NOTICE PLEASE: As you **read this**, you get **no sense** that **this Pharaoh had any idea who Moses was**.

Moses was raised in Egypt, in Pharaoh's home for forty years, the Pharaoh that wanted to kill him had died, he comes back and we would imagine that he is going to run into the oldest son of that Pharaoh, who he was likely raised with, and who knows him.

But there is no hint this Pharaoh knows Moses. **NO HINT AT ALL! This will come back around when we look at the Archaeology of the Exodus on Sunday evening October 15th.**

Vs 3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."

This is really interesting for Moses records that **they said**, Moses and Aaron said, to Pharaoh. So, they (already Moses is beginning to speak) **restate** the request and provide additional information than the **first ask**.

But **Yahweh** the God of the Hebrews has met with us. This phrase that God has met with us reminds me of what we read in Acts:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." (Ac 4:13 ESV)

Where did the apostle's boldness come from? It came from being with Jesus! This reminds us of what the writer of Hebrews said about Moses:

"By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb 11:27 ESV)

IN THE SAME WAY: We endure, we are made strong, we find our boldness as we spend time with and rely on the one who is invisible.

Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh the God of the Hebrews met with us and He is asking you to let the Hebrews go.

In the Hebrew, there is no please. But rather a request, it is not an imperative, but a request to let them go.

Then the request is clarified with **four additional details**:

- 1) It is actually a **three day journey** into the wilderness that they ask for.
- 2) That means they will be gone for around a week, or so.
- 3) It is also to **offer sacrifices** to **Yahweh our Elohim**

The **prior verse** was to **celebrate, a feast**. But, here Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh it is also to offer sacrifices. Later in Exodus, we are going to see the tabernacle, we are going to see the ark of the covenant, the establishment of the **Levitical Priesthood**, and in **Leviticus** the **establishment of the entire sacrificial system**.

All of this is going to be **established during this time**.

This sacrificial system was teaching a lot of lessons; there are a couple we should take away for now:

- a) Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins
"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." (Le 17:11 ESV)

"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Heb 9:22 ESV)
- b) The blood of bulls and goats could never atone for men's sins
"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Heb 10:4 ESV)
- c) All of this, served as various pictures and types of the one sacrifice of God's perfect Son.
- 4) Lest he fall on us, with pestilence or with sword.

This **forth point** is **interesting** and not anything that **Yahweh stated** (at least recorded). But it is true, none the less. There is a lesson that Israel must learn. Discipline occurs when they do not obey God.

**** Remember what we read about God getting ready to kill Moses last week? Moses now understands this about God!**

APPLICATION: God disciplines those whom He loves (Heb 12:6).

I am guessing that Moses also said this because he wanted **Pharaoh to understand** that **Yahweh was not a God to be trifled with**, He was not to be taken lightly, it was not wise to dismiss or brush Him off.

Now you may be **wondering** what is going on with this request. Is this like a **bait and switch**? Ask for **something small** and then demand **something large**, once Pharaoh approves the smaller thing?

I do not think so, I believe this too is the **mercy of God**. God is asking for a small thing, **making it as easy as possible for Pharaoh to obey**.

But Pharaoh will not obey, and God is going to deliver Israel through a mighty outstretched hand!

Vs 4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens."

But Pharaoh responded to them and used **their names**.

He then asks the question that really **exposes his heart**: **Why are you trying to take the people away from their work?**

Pharoah ask Moses and Aaron: What are you really up to here?

We wonder if he knows that Moses has not lived in Egypt for 40 years, **it does not seem so**. It seems like he sees them both, as coming out of the nation.

Again, it seems this **Pharoah does not recognize Moses**.

Get back to work. **Get back to your burdens!**

It seems Pharoah believes these are two slaves, who have come up with a scheme to get the nation out of work, and even slip them out of the land and Pharoah is having nothing to do with it.

Get back to your burdens!

Vs 5 And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!"

Pharoah goes on to say the Israelites in the land **are many** and what you are doing is causing them to **rest from their burdens**.

From **Pharoah's perspective** this is nothing more than a **scheme** that is **getting his slaves of the hook from working**.

This is, from Pharoah's perspective, unacceptable!

Vs 6-8 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, 7 "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.'

That very day, likely frustrated with Moses and Aaron and to prove that he is in charge, Pharoah gives a new command to the taskmasters (likely Egyptian) and their foremen (likely Hebrew).

Pharoah brings those who directly oversee the Hebrew slaves and commands them: **Stop providing straw** to the people, for the making of bricks as has been done in the past.

Rather, now let the Hebrews **go and find the straw** on their own to make the bricks.

But, the **number of bricks** they are required to make, their quota will remain unchanged. The taskmaster and foremen are not to reduce the quota, but it shall remain the same.

Instead of relief and a week or so off to go and worship Yahweh, **Pharoah makes their toil even harder!**

Then you see what is on his mind as he declares... **They are idle!** That is the reason they are crying let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.

It is because they have too much time on their hands! If they have so much time on their hands that they can take a week off, then they **can gather their own straw**.

Vs 9 Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words."

In fact, not only can they collect their own straw, lay heavy and greater burdens on them, lay additional work on them.

Let them have more work and this will take their minds off these **lying words** from Moses and Aaron.

Again, Pharaoh is laying heavier work on them, that will focus their attention, and they will stop paying heed to these **lying words** of Moses and Aaron.

Here we see what Pharaoh thinks about the message from Moses and Aaron. It is nothing more than lying words and some additional burdens on the Hebrew men will help them see that!

Vs 10-11 ¶ So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I will not give you straw. 11 Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.'"

So, the taskmasters (likely Egyptian) and the foremen of the people (likely Hebrews) went to the Israelites, the workers and told them what **Pharaoh had declared**.

Notice **thus says Pharaoh...** "**Thus says the Lord**" is answered by "**thus says Pharaoh!**"

From Pharaoh "**I will not give you straw.**"

You will not receive straw, you will need to get it yourselves, but the quota is not reduced!

Now, maybe you are thinking do we really believe that the Egyptian's had brick quotas for their slaves. I mean really, someone is counting the bricks and saying you are 50 short.

In fact: We have good evidence from Egyptian documents of brick quotas.

Vs 12-13 So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. 13 The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw."

So the Hebrews were scattering all over Egypt to gather stubble (straw) to be used to make the bricks.

Meanwhile the taskmasters were **urgent** with the people. The idea of the Hebrew word is that they **pressed them**. Your **quota remains unchanged**, and they pressed them to complete their **daily assignments**.

You can imagine that to reach their quotas it is now taking more hours of labor and in some cases, maybe in all cases, as you will see, they are not making their quotas.

PUT YOURSELF, for a moment, in the shoes of the Hebrews. How would you feel, what would you be thinking?

Vs 14 And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?"

So the taskmaster (Egyptians) had set foremen (Hebrews) over the people. The taskmasters brought the foremen in and **beat them** demanding: "**Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?**"

The foremen were beaten because the Hebrew men were not reaching their quotas as they had in the past!

Now I mentioned this last week, when I quoted Wiersbe, but it is worth repeating here. **When God began to deliver the nation, it got worse** (for the Hebrews), **before it got better.**

APPLICATION: When we find ourselves in tribulation, in suffering, in hardships, do not forget that sometimes God builds that into the scenario. At times God allows these times in our lives to test us, to grow us, to mature us, and to strengthen us.

It turns out it is through much tribulation that we will enter the kingdom of Heaven (Acts 14:22).

Vs 15-16 Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, "Why do you treat your servants like this? 16 No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people."

This caused the foremen of the Hebrews, those who had a tiny amount of authority go to Pharaoh and complain.

Now it is interesting that Pharaoh gave them audience, but we can imagine he did so, not to hear their concerns. But to reiterate his demands. But it is interesting that Pharaoh gives the **foremen an audience.**

The foremen, understanding that the issue with straw, the edict involving straw came straight from the top, they cry out to Pharaoh, with what is really three points:

FIRST, why are you treating us like this, why are you holding back straw and yet maintaining the full quota?

You can imagine they decided they would present this argument, present their concerns to the Pharaoh and he will understand that he needs to ease up. He will understand that this demand is unreasonable, and he will **lighten the load.**

SAD NOTE: The people of Israel did not cry out to God, they did not appeal to Moses, instead, they went to the slave master who had inflicted the burden in the first place and they cried out to Pharaoh. Obviously, this is a great point of application.

SECOND, they cried out to Pharaoh that they were beaten down, but this was to no fault of our own. We are willing to work, but we are not being provided with what we need to fulfill the demands.

Surely Mr. Pharaoh you see the **fault is that of your own people!**

We must assume, that they are thinking: The Pharaoh does not realize how this has played out and as soon as he does, he will make an adjustment to this new policy.

APPLICATION: Going to Pharaoh to voice your concerns is good, but prior to that they should have taken this matter to the Father in prayer.

Prayer, pray for direction, pray for wisdom, pray over if you should go and if so, what you should say.

"The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." (Ps 145:18 ESV)

"6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:6-7 ESV)

They did not understand what we learn from Paul and what he said to the church in Ephesus:

"10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:10-12 ESV)

The big problem, they were in a spiritual battle, and all their responses were in the flesh.

Vs 17 But he said, "You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'

Pharoah responds, **you are idle, you are idle...**

It is this desire to be idle, that is what is causing you to cry out and ask: ***"Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD."***

From Pharoah's perspective: **What is driving this whole problem is you do not have enough work.**

Vs 18 Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks."

Go now and work... We are done talking, the audience with me has ended. Go now and work and stop being idle.

But understand, no straw will be given to you and the quota will not be eased.

GO, get out of my presence!

Vs 19 The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, "You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day."

As this point the foremen recognized that the people of Israel were in real trouble.

They recognized that **Pharoah was serious**. He was not going to provide straw, and they were going to be held to the quota that had been assigned.

You can imagine that the taskmasters are now also **beginning to fear for their own long-term well-being!**

Vs 20-21 They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; 21 and they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Moses and Aaron were waiting for the taskmasters, likely to see how the meeting with Pharoah went.

The taskmasters came out of their meeting with Pharoah and the immediately ran into Moses and Aaron.

The taskmaster said to Moses and to Aaron:

- 1) **May the Lord** look on what you two have done and bring judgement. May God look upon all that you have caused and judge you for it.
- 2) **You have come here** and what you have done makes us a stench in the nostrils of Pharoah.
- 3) **You have put the sword** in his hand that will kill us. What you are doing will lead to our death!

We were fine and now you have come along and you have slandered us among the Egyptians and with Pharaoh.

So, you know, this will not be the last time where Moses is opposed by his own people who fail to understand what the Lord is actually doing!

Vs 22 Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?"

Then Moses turned to Yahweh and in prayer asked two questions:

1) O Lord, why have you done this evil to the people?

It is interesting and surprising that Moses attributes the evil done to Yahweh.

Had not God been clear with Moses about the path ahead? Pharaoh has opposed Moses and Aaron, as God said he would:

"But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand." (Ex 3:19 ESV)

"And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go." (Ex 4:21 ESV)

Second, Moses asks:

2) Why did you send me?

Why have you sent me, nothing good has been accomplished, in fact the whole matter has only gotten worse.

Why did you interrupt my life in Midian? Why did you send me, nothing good has been accomplished?

Moses questions are **very instructive for us today**, so do not let the **lessons be lost**.

1) Did the Lord do evil to the people? NO.

2) Who was doing evil to the people? Pharaoh and Egypt.

3) Had Yahweh told Moses the mission would be difficult? Yes, multiple times and in multiple ways!

God was clear with Moses that Pharaoh would not let the Hebrews go unless and until he was compelled by a mighty hand.

APPLICATION: If we are going to make an impact for the kingdom of Christ, **we should expect resistance**. Satan is not going to roll-over for us. As God allows, Satan is going to resist, and he will desire to attack every area of our lives.

Our health, our finances, our families, every area that he can!

To question #2: *Why did you send me?*

Why did God send Moses?

Come (GO), I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex 3:7-10 ESV)

God had been clear why: He is sending Moses, to deliver His people Israel out of the hands of their Egyptian captives.

Fear can cause amnesia. Fear is the antithesis of faith. Moses has quickly forgotten everything God said. Yahweh gave Moses a clear mission, and obstacles have taken Moses' eye off the mission.

We can do the same thing! Troubles in this life can cause us to take our eye off the mission, it can cause us to shrink back in fully trusting our God.

Then Moses concludes his prayer...

Vs 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."

Further, as if Moses has not already said enough to Yahweh, Moses says: Since the time I came to Pharaoh **to speak in your name** he has done evil to this people.

AND YOU HAVE NOT delivered your people AT ALL!

You have not done the slightest thing by way of delivering your people that you promised!

NOT AT ALL!

LESSON TO LEARN: Was Moses doing the will of God? Yes!

Is it turning out to be very difficult? Yes!

God never told us that His mission for our lives would be easy. Only that He has a mission for our lives and that through that mission we can glorify Him.

Was Jesus' mission easy? No!

Moses in the midst of this trial is beginning to question God's goodness, God's purposes, and even God's abilities. Moses is having what we would call a crisis of faith. Keep in mind this is coming on the heels of one of the most amazing personal events recorded in the entire Bible. God meeting Moses at the burning bush.

If we are going to impact the kingdom of God, it may prove to come at some level of difficulty as the Kingdom of darkness resists our efforts.

OK, we are going to interrupt our lesson here. Moses is angry and frustrated with God for he feels like God has not done what God said he would do.

Next week we will see how a loving Father responds to His angry and confused prophet!