**The Gospel According to Moses**

**An Outstretch Hand and a Hard Heart**

**Exodus 7:1-13**

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We are working our way through the Old Testament book of Exodus in a Sermon Series called the Gospel According to Moses. Today we start chapter seven, we see that God makes himself known to Pharoah as the Sovereign Lord. Exodus 7:1-13 begins to answer Pharaoh’s question, who is the Lord (5:2). The book of Exodus describes the deliverance of Israel but more importantly it tells us about God making himself known. We find our big idea in 7:5, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I exert my power and bring Israel out of Egypt. God is making himself known to Egypt and Israel and every one of us in Exodus. My big idea today is that God makes himself known as the Sovereign Lord. He does this three ways: God makes himself known as the Sovereign Lord first, by making Moses as God to Pharoah; then by hardening Pharoah’s heart; and finally, by Aaron’s staff swallowing up the magician’s staffs. Let’s look at the first way God makes himself known as the Sovereign Lord, God makes Moses God to Pharoah.

**God Makes Moses God to Pharoah (1-2)**

Look at 7:1-2, I have made you like God to Pharaoh and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. Literally, the text says I have made you God to Pharoah. Not that he becomes God like pantheism but has Godlike authority over Egypt and Pharoah. He speaks all that God commands, demanding that Pharoah let Israel go (2) and he speaks the truth and all that he says comes to pass. Knowing a bit about Egypt helps us to see why God did this with Moses. Many of us are familiar with king Tut or Tutankhamun whose name means the living image of the god Khamun. It was common for a Pharaoh to believe they were the embodiment of their god. So when Moses confronts Pharaoh, Pharaoh as god, is thinking, who is this nobody, a fugitive, who comes before me demanding that I release slaves. It is just the opposite of what Pharaoh understands. It is Moses who is God to Pharaoh when Pharaoh thinks he is God to Moses.

All of us need humility. It comes in one of two ways, the easy way and the hard way. The easy way will always be less painful in the long run. Scripture tells us three times that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (Prov 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). God resists, pushes hard against those who are proud but loves to give grace to those who recognize their neediness. If you are here today and feel needy and weak, if you feel overwhelmed by life or some situation, the good news is you're the kind of person that Jesus loves to help, to pour out his grace, his empowering presence. In contrast, if you are proud, resistant to God’s word, then he will oppose you just like he did Pharaoh.

So, God makes himself known to Pharoah as the Sovereign Lord. Pharaoh is not God, God is God. He does this by making Moses as God to Pharoah, and secondly, by hardening Pharaoh’s heart.

**God Hardens Pharoah’s Heart (3-5)**

There's are at least three ways of describing Pharoah hard heart in Exodus. First it is described as God hardening Pharaoh's heart (3). Secondly, Pharaoh is described as hardening his own heart (8:15). And it is described as Pharoah’s heart was hardened (13). So, Pharaoh is responsible for his own actions and his own choices but he is not ultimately sovereign over his own life, God is (Rom 9:16-18). Neither Pharoah nor Moses are ultimately calling the shots, God is. When we read about God hardening Pharaoh's heart our questions usually go to freewill and human responsibility, but the book of Exodus is more concerned about God's freedom to have mercy on whom he will have mercy (Rom 9:15; Ex 33:19). God is just because no one deserves mercy. We will continue to address these issues as we work through Exodus, but God is the Sovereign Lord. God is God and Pharoah is not.

Beware of a hard heart. Be concerned when you start drifting away from Jesus (Rev 2:4). Later in Exodus we will see that Israel has a hard heart too. The New Testament book of Hebrews uses their example to warn Christians not to harden their heart which leads to abandoning Jesus Christ. So far, we have seen that God makes himself known two ways, by Moses being God to Pharaoh and by God hardening Pharaoh's heart. The third way God makes himself known as the Sovereign Lord is by Aaron’s staff devouring Pharoah’s magicians staffs.

**God Makes a Meal of the Magicians Staffs (8-13)**

Pharoah challenges Moses and Aaron, demanding they perform a miracle, show me what you got. Aaron throws his staff down at Pharoah’s feet and it becomes a serpent. Unimpressed, Pharaoh calls his magicians and priests who did the same by their secret arts. There are two power sources, God and Satan, reminding us that this conflict is between God and Pharaoh.[[1]](#footnote-1)

But why use a staff and why a serpent? Pharaoh’s staff was often described as the rod of god and symbolized his sovereign power and authority. When Pharoah was installed as king, he received the power and authority of his god. Serpents were considered magical, having power associated with the underworld, and a sign of Pharoah’s sovereignty, his power and authority. Pharaoh’s crown had the image of a serpent in an aggressive stance, so that its head was flared. So, when Aaron throws his staff down at Pharoah’s feet, he is challenging Pharoah’s divine power and authority. Aarons staff swallowing up all five staffs/serpents demonstrates that God has sovereign power and authority over Pharoah and his god. The imagery of serpent as enemy of God goes back to the garden of Eden when Satan deceived Adam and Eve, then forward to the garden gethsemane when Jesus submitted to the Father to go to the cross, and then to the end of time when the ancient serpent, Satan, will be cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

God makes himself known as the Sovereign Lord three ways by making Moses God to Pharoah, by hardening Pharoah’s heart, and by making a meal of the five staffs. God is God and Pharaoh is not. Moses is Israel’s deliverer who points us to a greater deliverer, Jesus Christ who is God to us and God for us. Jesus is God and we are not. We do not call the shots in our own lives, we are not in control of our own lives as we like to think and act like we do. We are in need of a Savior to save us and a Sovereign Lord to follow. The bad news is that if you want to be in control of your life, if you want to be your own savior and deliverer, God opposes you. But the good news is that if you recognize you are needy, don’t do a great job of controlling your life, then Jesus loves to come to help you, to save you, to empower you. Follow Jesus, don’t drift. God is God and you are not.

Life Group Questions:

1. What other gods do we deal with on a daily basis?
2. Summarize the big idea of Exodus 7:1-13 in your own words.
3. How does God make himself known today in our world?
4. Moses was God to Pharaoh and God calls us to represent him to others. How do we do that?
5. What does James 4:6 say and what does it mean?
6. What is humility and why does God love to give grace to the humble?
7. What do you think verse seven tells us the ages of Moses and Aaron?
8. Have you ever seen a miracle? Describe it for us.
9. What is the point of Aaron’s staff swallowing up the magicians staffs?
10. Why does he call them staffs and not serpents?
11. What is the meaning of Aaron’s staff swallowing up the other staffs for us today?
12. How does this passage encourage you in your faith?
13. What does this teach us about following Jesus in discipleship?
14. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?

1. Other examples of demonic power in the Old Testament is the witch of Endor bringing up Saul (1 Sam 28). In the New Testament you see Simon the sorcerer performing miracles (Acts 8:19-25). False disciples claiming to have done miracles and prophesied, but Jesus says he never knew them (Mat 7:21-23). Then in Matthew 24 Jesus describes signs and wonders did by the antichrist that would deceive even the elect if that were possible (24:24). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)