

## Exodus 5-11

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Location: MRC

Word Count: 3500

**Theme:** The LORD acts in judgment to reveal himself, yet is not universally worshipped...

**Aim:** Humble confidence that the LORD is King and victorious, yet Satan real and despite seeing, not everyone will believe.

Last week we talked about names  
& the importance of names...

**Names mean things in the bible.**

For us they're just a tag that we assign to people.

So think of Smith.

THE most common surname in England & America

It comes from the job of a person who works with metal.

A black-smith for example

& what begins as an occupational name  
comes to be used as a surname.

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But what if... in years gone by

you meet a man called smith

he is a blacksmith

but you don't know what that means

What it *actually* entails

The heating of the metal in a fire

The skill of bending & shaping it into what it's going to be...

A horseshoe

An axe

A weapon

If you've no idea what the name meant

Then you're none the wiser

as to who they are

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And last time the LORD said to Moses  
you want a name for me?

I AM who I AM  
I WILL BE who I WILL BE

I am real & I exist  
you can count on me  
& that's who I will be

& if you want to know what I'm like?

Well keep watching  
Watch as I work in history

Which is what we see this week

Here - in chs 5-11 we find out what the Lord is like.

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& the way we'll do it  
is by focusing in on those verses read for us  
chapter 7v1-13

which seem to act as a prologue  
introducing the key themes.

And from those verses as our vantage point  
we'll look at the wider text together

2 points to hang our ideas off

**The LORD: magnificent but not unchallenged by enemies**

**The LORD: made known but not worshipped by all**

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**The LORD: magnificent but not unchallenged by enemies**

That is.

This is not a clash of 2 earthly kingdoms

This is... not a clash of 2 diplomats

This is a clash of Pharaoh -

& the supernatural powers behind him

& the LORD

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You see that especially v8-10:

<sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, <sup>9</sup> “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.” <sup>10</sup> So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake.

& the snake is not random.

Coz you see the snake is a symbol of Egyptian power.

You look on Pharaoh’s headdress

***Pharaoh – the most powerful man on earth...***

& there would be a snake

As someone’s put it

whoever bears the cobra

bears the sceptre

Moses takes his staff

& throws it down

it becomes a snake

& so the LORD’s saying

I am the boss.

But he’s challenged v11...

Pharaoh picks up the gauntlet.

<sup>11</sup> [He] then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: <sup>12</sup> Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs.

God says I am the boss.

& Pharaoh says really...?

as his magicians also turn staffs into snakes.

They DO replicate the signs

God *is* challenged...

But soon we see where the balance of power lies.  
As Aaron's staff-snake eats the others.

It may not have looked like it  
But this personal – passionate – powerful God  
as we saw last week  
cares about his people  
& now's come the time to flex his muscles  
& make it clear who's in charge

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**& yet I'm convinced – actually –  
there's more going on.**

As we said it's *not* just a clash of civilizations...

But the word for snake used here  
I'm told... is a very unusual one.  
It's not the standard word

It's a word that in the bible again & again

comes to epitomize the chaotic  
forces of evil  
those forces of evil  
that God overcomes  
to create an  
ordered  
purposeful kingdom.

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The LORD is re-moulding  
re-shaping the world after the Fall

Bringing purpose & order –  
out of chaos & suffering

& so we see in these chapters – I take it  
it's not just the kingdom of Egypt  
being shown who's boss  
but the Kingdom of darkness.

Thus its final fate is seen as the snake is devoured...  
its fate is seen step by step by step

at each of the 10 plagues

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Now if you were observant last week...

You might have noticed

in chapter 4v22-23

God says this...

'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, <sup>23</sup> and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'

That is.

God knows there are going to be 10 plagues.

He knows the 1<sup>st</sup> & the 2<sup>nd</sup> & the 3<sup>rd</sup> & the 4<sup>th</sup>

& so on - aren't going to persuade Pharaoh

& so we say why go though them all?

Well the 10 plagues are not random.

Just as the snake wasn't a random object to turn a staff into - it represented power & authority in Egypt...

So it seems each plague

targets another god of Egypt.

or at least another aspect of creation

that they believed their gods ruled over

& the LORD dispatches them one by one by one...

*Soooo*

Plague 1

the Nile God - Hapi is left defeated

Plague 2

the goddess Heqet - represented by a little frog symbol is done away with

Right through to

Plague 9

the sun god Ra is dispatched

Absolute darkness.

There were no streetlights

no torches  
no bulbs in the house

Darkness.

Ra is nothing when he stands next to the true God.

To the LORD.

The covenant God of his people.

This isn't just a random display of power  
but so called god by so called god  
the true God – I AM is at work

Finishing up with

Pharaoh & the plague on the firstborn  
Pharaoh himself who was worshipped as a god  
the god Horus

So there we have it

***The LORD: magnificent but not unchallenged by enemies***

& so it is today.

We must go away from here

amazed by the power of the LORD

...nothing can thwart him from rescuing his people  
so they can worship him.

...no so called gods can compete.

Even those gods that are so alluring & promise us sooo much  
gods of success & power & money & popularity  
they will all be shown to be nothing.

Of course we think they'll provide

& we're told they'll provide...

But they never do

Madonna's a fascinating & honest individual  
when she says this:

I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to  
conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy. . . I push past  
one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being,  
and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and  
uninteresting. . . . Again and again. My drive in life is from this  
horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me,  
pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still

have to prove I'm Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.

The god of being a success  
of not being mediocre or inadequate

That god will never win.  
will always be shown to be... nothing  
vacuous

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& Opposing him is a monumentally foolish thing to do.

One book I was reading  
put it very starkly & challengingly like this...

- When a Cambodian dictator slaughters people made in his image, [the LORD] won't stand for it.
- When Richard Dawkins writes a book arrogantly dismissing God as a delusion [the LORD] won't stand for it.

- When your nicest friend loved by everybody and planning a career helping AIDS orphans decides that Jesus isn't really for her [the LORD] won't stand for it.

The plagues are God's megaphone -  
I am [the LORD].  
Look what happens if you oppose me.<sup>1</sup>

He is opposed - challenged...

The magicians are able  
They have an ugly - destructive power  
to turn staffs into snakes  
to make water like blood  
& even to make a few frogs

But soon his power is beyond them.

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& yet get interesting questions in the life of Jesus  
Where we see another rescue for the people of God

<sup>1</sup> pg 54 - Dig Even Deeper

He's opposed – challenged by the Pharisees  
coz they know their OTs like the back of their hands  
...of course power is available...

they say

where do you get this ability from to do miracles?  
what power source are you tapping into?

Jesus' answer?

Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup> If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Today we see Satan is at work.

I take it Satan who was behind the power of Pharaoh...

He's been defeated & vanquished.

But until Jesus' kingdom is finally consummated  
He's seeking to undo the work of the gospel as best he can.

Creating division & disunity in churches  
Causing people to run after other so called gods

But he is defeated.

Just as the LORD smashed the Egyptian so-called gods  
So he smashed Satan at the cross.

This display of power was a kind of dress rehearsal  
for another one in years to come...

As Paul puts it in Colossians

disarming the powers and authorities,  
he made a public spectacle of them,  
triumphing over them by the cross.

so firstly

***the LORD: magnificent but not unchallenged by enemies***

secondly

***The LORD: made known but not worshipped by all***

So the Plagues are revelatory  
that is  
they are communicating who God is.

I will be who I will be

You want to know who I am?

Then watch says the LORD

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One of the things I'm not looking forward to  
as the kids grow up  
is to meet their first boyfriends & girlfriends...



I've got a whole cunning raft of  
exercises and tests that I'm planning  
to see whether they are of suitable material...

What will the (hopefully) timid individual be like  
who walks in our front door?  
how will they cope with  
the spaghetti bolognese challenge?  
& how much mess will they make!?

You see when the jury is out on someone  
we're watching to see  
what they are like.  
what kind of an individual are they?  
how do they function in various situations...

How they act reveals to us something of who they are...

& so it is...  
magnified infinitely  
in these verses...

We're shown who the Lord is.  
The Plagues are revelatory

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So in the start of our verses - ch 5.

Moses & Aaron head off to Pharaoh

knees knocking

& say **let us go so we can worship the LORD  
in the desert...**

& Pharaohs response?

.....Who??!

“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.”

& again & again & again

through these 7 chapters

we see why the LORD is striking Egypt...

Just a few...

7v5 – & the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD

8v10 – that Pharaoh might know there is no-one like the LORD  
their God

9v16 – that the LORD’s name might be proclaimed in all the  
earth

& then 10v2 –

it’s even to become part of the Sunday school syllabus!

that you may tell your children & grandchildren

how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians

& how I performed my signs among them

& that you may know that I am the LORD

Not one among a number of LORDs

But THE LORD.

No-one challenges or rivals him

So through the plagues... the LORD

– makes his name known to Egyptians.

– makes his names known to his people... & future people

– makes his name known to world

& I’m struck by just

how small a view of God I can have...

how short-sighted & myopic

how the things that stress me & worry me

can overshadow him

& not vice versa...

Psalm 105:

1 Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;

make known among the nations what he has done.

2 Sing to him, sing praise to him;

tell of all his wonderful acts.

3 Glory in his holy name;  
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

4 Look to the LORD and his strength;  
seek his face always.

5 Remember the wonders he has done,  
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

23 Then Israel entered Egypt;  
Jacob resided as a foreigner in the land of Ham.

24 The LORD made his people very fruitful;  
he made them too numerous for their foes,  
25 whose hearts he turned to hate his people,  
to conspire against his servants.

26 He sent Moses his servant,  
and Aaron, whom he had chosen.

27 They performed his signs among them,  
his wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness and made the land dark—  
for had they not rebelled against his words?

29 He turned their waters into blood,  
causing their fish to die.

30 Their land teemed with frogs,

which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers.

31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,  
and gnats throughout their country.

32 He turned their rain into hail,  
with lightning throughout their land;

33 he struck down their vines and fig trees  
and shattered the trees of their country.

34 He spoke, and the locusts came,  
grasshoppers without number;

35 they ate up every green thing in their land,  
ate up the produce of their soil.

36 Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land,  
the firstfruits of all their manhood.

And the Psalm finishes

Praise the LORD.

This LORD who utterly crushed Egypt...

is with us here this morning.

He is OUR... LORD

He is powerful & awesome.

& when we're  
Terrified...  
by the future?  
or by that thing coming up in the diary  
or by our boss  
or anything...

Look  
at the LORD  
at his power...

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And yet notice his power... for some  
is not reason to believe or to follow him

He's **made known: but not worshipped by all.**

I remember in years gone by  
people saying what we need is a miracle.  
THAT will convince people as to who God is.

Of course that didn't work with Jesus as we've seen already...  
The Pharisees didn't deny the miracles

They just questioned where his power came from  
& then killed him

Miracles don't convince people  
& cause them to worship  
& we see that in stark & vivid clarity with Pharaoh  
as he hardens & his heart is hardened by God.

Just because he sees God so CLEARLY at work  
& all his advisors are pointing it out to him...  
it doesn't mean he falls on his knees & worships

No.  
The opposite happens.  
At the close of play  
He actually ends up more resolutely anti-God...

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☺ This is a controversial bit.  
People often feel very uncomfortable  
with the idea that God can harden anyone's heart...

**So 3 things to say -**

1. Pharaoh became what he already was.

He was already a cruel murdering tyrant...  
already hard against God.

You see if you follow it through in Exodus

I *think* you see a progression...

Exodus 7v13

Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard

Exodus 7v22

Pharaoh's heart became hard

Exodus 8v15

Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and

Exodus 8v19

Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen

Exodus 8v32

Pharaoh hardened his heart

Exodus 9v12

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart

Exodus 9v34

Pharaoh and his officials hardened their hearts.

Exodus 10v1

The LORD hardened his heart

Exodus 10v20

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart

Exodus 10v27

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart

Exodus 11v10

The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart

At the beginning we read

Pharaoh is hardening his heart

& His heart was hard

But by the end – just as he said he would  
the LORD is hardening

To use the language of Paul in Romans 1.

<sup>21</sup> For although [he] knew God, [he] neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but [his] thinking became futile and [his] foolish hearts [was] darkened.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave [him] over in the sinful desires of [his] heart...

God judges him by giving him what he wants...

2. The second thing to briefly says is  
Pharaoh is still accountable for his sin.

The bible is full of evil decisions that people make  
Decisions that they are responsible for  
& yet the Lord uses them  
&..... somehow  
works those decisions  
into his plans & purposes.

You see for example in Cyrus the Persian king  
whom the LORD raises up for a time

to fulfill his purposes  
& yet who is still accountable for his sin...

You see it most magnificently  
in the cross  
where... as Peter puts it in Acts 2...

<sup>22</sup> "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. <sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Was it God's plan?  
Yes.  
Are they accountable for their wickedness?  
Yes.

Pharaoh –  
who has a purpose in God's plans  
is still accountable for his sin

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& yet we say...

but that doesn't sound fair!?!

how can God do that?

**3.** God is not obliged to save anybody.

That is hard for us to stomach

& we don't like that very much.

& flies in the face of any sort of political correctness...

But it's what the bible teaches

Paul goes on later in Romans to say...

<sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. <sup>17</sup> For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." <sup>18</sup> Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

The hard truth is we all deserve punishment

We long for justice in the world...

And then we look into our own hearts

& recognize that justice would condemn us

No.

None of us deserve God's mercy

it's all a gift

it's not a right we have...

But the wonderful truth is that

many in this room have received his mercy & his grace.

**Let's pray.**