



Exodus – The Redeemer

The book of Exodus shows us how the Lord called Moses and commissioned him as His reluctant redeemer, the one who would bring His people, Israel, out of bondage in Egypt at the exact time and in the exact way He promised Abraham in Genesis 15. In doing so, the Lord reveals Himself to Moses, to Aaron, to the Israelites, and to the Egyptians. He reveals His awesome strength and power and glory against Egypt so that the children of Israel could see Him and get to know Him better, so that they may worship Him, offer sacrifices to Him, and hold a feast to Him in the wilderness.

The Exodus is about redemption. The redemption of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, and more importantly a foreshadow of the redemption of all believers from bondage of sin by the life and work of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. And yet we are shown that this redemption comes at a price, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (He 9:22).

Moses' Call

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, near the mountain of God at Horeb when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush, which was not consumed (Ex 3:1-2). Moses decided to go look, to see why the bush did not burn up (Ex 3:3); when God saw him approaching He called to him, and Moses answered (Ex 3:4). He said not to draw any closer, and to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground (Ex 3:5). Then God, setting out to fulfill Genesis 15:13-14, says “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:6); and then “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites” (Ex 3:7-8).

We all know the story; God says He has heard the cry of the children of Israel and he has seen their oppression (Ex 3:9); then He says He will send Moses to Pharaoh so Moses can



bring the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 3:10); and Moses reacts as most of us would, by saying ‘Why me Lord?’ (Ex 3:11). God responds “Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain” (Ex 3:12); Moses then asks God’s name so he can tell the children of Israel who has sent him (Ex 3:13); and God responds “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Ex 3:14); and then “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Ex 3:15). In conclusion God says “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.” (Ex 3:16-22).

Moses doubts his own ability to speak to Pharaoh, so God sends his brother Aaron with him, to speak for him. Moses is commissioned by God as redeemer of his people, to bring them out of bondage in Egypt to the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, where they will serve God. And so, Moses becomes a foreshadow of the future coming Messiah. Moses knew this, and later told the Israelites “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Dt 18:15). The confirmation that this is fulfilled in Christ comes in Acts 3:18-26, specifically verse 22.

At this point I have two questions I have asked myself, and so I will ask you. First, why did God appear to Moses in a burning bush that was not consumed? and second, what is the significance of God waiting until now to reveal His covenant name Yehovah, יהוה? That is, aside from the fact that Moses asked Him.



Up until now God revealed Himself in simple ways, visions and dreams, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So why now in such an extraordinary, miraculous way to Moses? Was God planning for the movie to be made some thirty-five hundred years later? I think not! Maybe we can glimpse a clue if we look at Moses' life so far. He was born an Israelite, raised by Pharaoh's daughter, raised in nobility, killed an Egyptian, fled to the desert, married a Medianite woman, and tended her father's flock. Well, maybe it has to do with something God will ask Moses to do once He is revealed? I would say a definite yes to this.

Remember, God always meets us at our points of greatest need. God wanted Moses to be His ambassador of redemption to Pharaoh and to Israel, showing them both His greatness, His strength, His compassion for His children, and His longsuffering patience when He has Moses and Aaron ask Pharaoh so many times to release His children. And so, if Moses is going to represent God in all His strength and with His miraculous powers, He wanted to make sure Moses first understood a little of who He is. God humbled Moses during the second forty years of his life, and then at the age of eighty He showed Moses His miraculous powers, His patience, and His anger so that Moses would be able to tell Pharaoh about the Lord from first hand experience. This is also why God revealed His covenant name Yehovah, יהוה, which means the self-existent one.

There are other reasons why God would choose this time in history to reveal His covenant name. One of them has to do with the fact that all the gods of the Egyptians had names, so that they would be better able to relate to a God with a name. However, I think these reasons pale in comparison to the main reason why God revealed His covenant name to Moses at this time. Do you have any idea where I am going with this? I have given you a key clue when I say His "covenant" name. Moses' role as redeemer of the Israelites is a foreshadow of the new testament, the new covenant, in Christ's blood (1Co 11:15), Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant (He 8:6, 9:15), and He redeemed us with His own blood (He 9:12-14). Moses even says "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Dt 18:15); which we know is Christ (Ac 3:22-24). Christ Himself used this covenant name so that He could make it clear to all who heard that He is the one to whom the name belongs. Jesus says "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:48), "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12, 9:5), "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58), "I am the door" (Jn 10:9), "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11, 14), "I am the Son of God" (Jn 10:36), "I am the resurrection, and the life" (Jn 11:25), "I am come a light into the world" (Jn 12:46), "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), and "I am the true vine" (Jn 15:1).

The name was given now as a sign post pointing to the mountain of God, which the Israelites would soon see, and to the One who would come from God's mountain many years in the future, the Messiah, the only One who has the right to use the name for Himself, Christ Jesus.



God's Covenant Name

God uses His covenant name first in Exodus 3:14, which in Hebrew is יהוה, most commonly pronounced Yahweh, sometimes written YHWH, and usually written LORD or LORD in the KJV bible. We have Anglicized it into Jehovah; see Isaiah 12:2. However, even though I do not know Hebrew as well as I'd like, my studies have revealed that the Hebrew letter vav (ו) seems to always be pronounced as a "v" sound, not as a "w", as in Jehovah, not as in Yahweh. I do know that the Israelites, after given the Law, were fanatical about not taking the Lord's name in vain, and so I suspect they changed the pronunciation on purpose so that they would never be guilty of doing that. But then, in my estimation, they have never had the pleasure of addressing the Lord by His covenant name directly. There is a certain familiarity and intimacy we have with the Lord when we do so with love and reverence, which the Israelites would never have experienced. Even the name Jehovah is not completely correct. We get its pronunciation when we take the consonants of God's covenant name and add all but the last vowel of Adonai (אדני), which means master, stressing God's authority. However the Hebrew letter yowd (ו) always seems to be pronounced with a "y" sound, not a "j". Therefore, in keeping with traditional Hebrew pronunciation, we most likely should be pronouncing God's covenant name as Yeh-ho-vah', written Yehovah.

The Covenant Remembered

Moses and Aaron went to ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go so that they may hold a feast to the Lord in the wilderness (Ex 5:1); and Pharaoh says he doesn't know the Lord and won't let the people go (Ex 5:2). Pharaoh then decides, for spite I suppose, to withhold the straw from the Israelites' making of bricks, just to make their task more difficult (Ex 5:6-7). Of course, the elders of Israel were upset with Moses and Aaron, blaming them for the way Pharaoh is now mistreating them (Ex 5:20-21); and Moses inquires of the Lord why He allows Pharaoh to bring this evil upon the Israelites (Ex 5:22-23).

God expected this reaction from Pharaoh, since He told Moses earlier "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go" (Ex 4:21). So when Moses asked the Lord why He allowed this evil upon the Israelites, the Lord responded "now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land" (Ex 6:1). The battle between God and Pharaoh is a common theme in the first half of the book of Exodus, with Moses caught in the middle, and all the while God is hardening Pharaoh's heart so he will continue not to listen to Moses and to say no to him,



until He has displayed His strength to all Israel, and to Pharaoh, but mostly to Israel, so that they would know the God they are to serve. See Exodus 3:19-20, 4:21, 7:3-4, 13-14, 9:12, 35, 10:1, 20, 27, 11:9-10, 14:4, 8. If you have any doubt that God hardens hearts, also see Deuteronomy 2:30, Joshua 11:20, 1 Samuel 6:6, Isaiah 63:17, John 12:40, and Romans 9:18.

God reminds Moses of his heritage and of his uniqueness saying “I am the LORD (יהוה): And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (אל שדי), but by my name JEHOVAH (יהוה) was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.” (Ex 6:2-5).

In verse 2, when God says “I am the LORD”, He uses His covenant name, Yehovah, with Moses, and goes on in verse 3 to say He did not use it with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, reinforcing my earlier argument that He specifically chose this time in history to make it known. When God did identify Himself to Abraham, at the time of the covenant of circumcision, He uses the name God Almighty (Ge 17:1). Isaac uses it also in his blessing of Jacob when he sends him off to take a wife from among Leban’s daughters (Ge 28:3); implying that Isaac learned of the name from his father Abraham. God then identifies Himself as God Almighty when He changes Jacob’s name to Israel (Ge 35:11). Israel uses it when he sends his sons back to Joseph in Egypt with his younger brother Benjamin (Ge 43:14); and again when he tells Joseph what God Almighty said when He appeared to him at Luz, in Canaan (Ge 48:3).

The Lord told Moses “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am the LORD.” (Ex 6:6-8)

These verses match up perfectly with the promises made in Genesis about becoming a stranger in a land that is not theirs, being afflicted four hundred years, and then God judging that nation (Ge 15:13-14, Ex 6:6); having God establish His everlasting covenant with them, to be a God to them (Ge 17:7, Ex 6:7); and bringing them into the land He promised to give to Abraham and his seed (Ge 15:18, 17:8), to Isaac and his seed (Ge 26:3-4), and to Jacob and his seed (Ge 28:13-15), and which will be fulfilled in Joshua 21:43 toward the end of their journey home from Egypt.



God's Strength Displayed

When Moses stands before Pharaoh it always seems to be a battle of wills; Pharaoh versus the Lord, with Moses caught in the middle. God continues to harden Pharaoh's heart until in the end he and his army are destroyed at the hand of the Lord, using the Red Sea as the instrument of His judgment.

The battle begins with Moses turning Aaron's rod into a serpent and Pharaoh's wise men doing the same, although Aaron's rod swallowed up theirs (Ex 7:7-14). Then comes the plagues on Egypt, which do not affect the Israelites. The Lord shows Israel both His awesome power as well as His mercy. The plagues are as follows.

1. The water in the river is turned to blood (Ex 7:20ff).
2. The land is covered with frogs (Ex 8:1ff).
3. The land is covered with lice (Ex 8:16ff).
4. The land is covered with swarms of flies (Ex 8:20ff).
5. The death of the cattle (Ex 9:1ff).
6. The Egyptians and their beasts are covered with boils (Ex 9:8ff).
7. A rain of heavy hail, killing those caught out in it (Ex 9:13ff).
8. The land is covered with locust (Ex 10:1ff).
9. The land is covered with thick darkness (Ex 10:21ff).
10. The death of the first-born male (Ex 12:29ff).

So why plagues? And why these specific plagues? Some people much more steeped in the history of ancient Egypt than I could ever be have answered the second question. They say each of the ten plagues was a blow by God at the heart of an Egyptian god, so that the true God could show them, the Egyptians, that their gods were impotent and could do nothing to help them. I believe the basis for this argument comes from Exodus 12:12. As I understand it, however, the ancient Egyptians, being pagans, had gods for just about everything, so these must then have been the ten most important gods. Right? Unfortunately I don't know enough to agree or disagree with this position. However, what I see in these plagues is the living God, the one true God, striking blows at the heart of life and all that sustains it. The one God who creates life and upholds it every second of every day, shows the Egyptians that He can also destroy life and all that sustains it, if He so chooses. He can make the water undrinkable, the land unusable, all food inedible, all life unlivable, and then bring death upon whom He chooses. An awesome display of His strength and His power over all creation. Moreover, throughout all of Old Testament history, God reminds the Israelites over and over again about what He did. "I am the



LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt” (Ps 81:10). This is just one reference to what God did out of many throughout the Old Testament.

As for why plagues at all, I suspect God had to make Himself known to a large group of people who never knew Him, except through the stories handed down from the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now it was time for them to meet God for themselves; it was time for the Israelites to know the awesomeness of His strength and power over all creation so that they may sacrifice unto the Lord (Ex 3:18), so that they may hold a feast to Him in the wilderness (Ex 5:1), and so that they may serve Him in the wilderness (Ex 7:16). I think God’s plan also included something additional, equally important as knowing His awesome strength and power. What is that, you ask?

Have you ever read Deuteronomy 28? Let me recap; the time is drawing near to when Moses will leave the Israelites; they have wandered in the dessert for forty years while the older generation died off and Moses trained up the younger generation. He has reviewed the law, has taught them all they need to know to be the people of God, and it’s close to the time where he has to send them on their way, so to speak, to go out on their own to serve God. And so we get to chapter 28, a chapter of 68 verses, the first 14 of which describe the blessings to be had for obedience to all God taught them through Moses. The remaining 54 verses, however, address God’s consequences for disobedience. The first time I read these verses, and the curses contained in them, I realized why my Jewish ancestors have been so persecuted down through the ages. As with all God’s promises, He has kept them all pertaining to their disobedience, including the ultimate consequence for rejecting the Messiah, who was the true reason for their being in existence as a people in the first place. They rejected the Messiah in 30 AD, and forty years later, long enough for the generation then living to repent or die off, God destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The city and the temple were the two earthly manifestations of Israel’s identity as the people of the living God; and with the destruction of the temple also went all the earthly birth records proving who belonged to which of the twelve tribes and also proving who owned what land. All wiped out forever by God, at the hand of the Romans. And here in Deuteronomy 28 is God’s promise of the future destruction to come as a result of Israel’s disobedience.

The plagues on Egypt, therefore, were visible to Israel so that they could see first hand that God could do, and would do, exactly what He said He would do. In Deuteronomy 28:58ff God promised them all the plagues of Egypt, and many more, in return for their disobedience, for not observing all the words of His law. God wanted obedience to His morale standard, according to His holiness and righteousness, knowing that they could never live up to it. Why do you think that is? Any idea? I think that right from the beginning He wanted them, and us, to realize that we could not be like Him, and we could not live up to His moral standard. If I may speak personally, God wants me to acknowledge that I cannot live up to His moral standard; I am incapable of doing it. It is so easy, and yet so difficult, to



admit that to Him. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Ro 7:24) Only by faith in Christ, in His death and resurrection, can I be delivered from my own disobedience, the sin that I do.

The First Passover

The final plague the Lord brought upon Egypt was the most dramatic, the death of the first-born male, the pride of the family in those days, and its future leadership; and in this final plague the Lord required Israel’s participation in order to survive. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying that the current month, Abib, also known as Nisan, was to become the first month of the year (Ex 12:1-2). On the tenth day of this month every house is to select a lamb (Ex 12:3), a male without blemish and one year old (Ex 12:5); on the fourteenth day of this same month the entire congregation of Israel is to kill the lamb in the evening at twilight, before sundown (Ex 12:6); and the blood of the lamb was to be put on the two side posts and the upper door post of each family’s house (Ex 12:7). The blood was for a sign upon the house so when God sees the blood on the posts He will pass over the house and not send in the destroyer to kill the first-born son (Ex 12:13).

This is a story I grew up knowing as a young boy on the East coast. Every year my family would go to my grandmother’s brother’s house to celebrate the Lord’s passover. It was a wonderful tradition, celebrated religiously until my father’s uncle died and no one in the family wanted to continue the tradition. I always asked a lot of questions, which were always answered by my uncle, so when he died I wanted to offer to continue the tradition, but never had the nerve or confidence to ask. Now, I don’t know how serious I really was in wanting to ask, and I most likely would have freaked if I did and they said yes; I suppose it was just me being me, wanting to challenge tradition. And, to my family, it was better not to celebrate the passover than to do it with some other adult stepping up to lead. The logic always escaped me, especially when my biggest issue with Judaism was that it was a religion of form with no substance when it matters; we went through the motions of doing what we were supposed to do, but no one’s heart was set on God. I didn’t realize until I became a follower of Christ, a Christian, and started studying the bible, that this was Christ’s issue as well.

The passover is a profound event in the course of human history. It portrays a faithful God who promised Abraham that He would not leave His people in oppression for more than four hundred years (Ge 15:13), and four hundred thirty years to the day He kept His promise (Ge 46:3, Ex 12:40-41); the difference being thirty years in favor due to Joseph’s favor with God and then four hundred years in oppression. Passover portrays a mighty God who has complete command over the physical world and all its creatures; and it portrays a God of



compassion and love who Himself redeemed Israel by His own hand out of bondage. And most importantly, passover portrays the future promise of redemption by the hand of the Messiah, Christ, one like Moses (Dt 18:15), the lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29, 36), our passover sacrificed for us (1Co 5:7), for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (He 9:22), and we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot (1Pe 1:18-19). The passover foreshadows God Himself redeeming His people from the bondage of sin through His own shed blood; His gift in love to those who believe. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Ro 5:8) to redeem us from the curse of the law (Ga 3:13).

The Ten Commandments

Three months after leaving Egypt the Israelites came to Sinai and camped before the mount (Ex 19:1-2). Moses met God on the mountain and the Lord said to him “Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Ex 19:3-6)

I discussed conditional covenants earlier, while in Genesis, and here we have a clear example of one. The Lord says that if Israel will obey His voice, His commandments, then Israel will be a peculiar treasure, a special people, to Him, above all people; they will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Obedience is the Lord’s request, and nothing less will satisfy Him; it is a common theme throughout the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 28 the Lord promises blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience; the Lord wants obedience from us, not sacrifices. This was a concept that has escaped most Israelites, even though God tried to make it clear to them. In 1 Samuel 15:22 Samuel says to Saul “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams.” (Also see Ps 51:16-17, Jer 7:22-23, Hos 6:6, and Mic 6:6-8.)

What does it mean to Israel to be a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation? The Lord promised in Genesis 17:1-14 that if Israel would be obedient, keep His covenant, He would be to them a God, with all the benefits and blessings described in Deuteronomy 28:1-14; and they would be His possession, called by His name, His special people, His peculiar treasure (Dt 4:20, 7:6, 14:2, 26:18, 1Ki 8:53, Ps 135:4, Tit 2:14, 1Pe 2:9); and they would be a kingdom of priests, who would offer up sacrifices to worship and to glorify the



living God (Lv 1-7, 1Pe 2:5, 9, Rv 1:6, 5:10); and they would be a holy nation, a people set apart from the world for the Lord, a people to whom the Lord would be their God (Dt 7:6, 14:2, 21, 26:19, Is 62:12).

Moses told the elders of Israel all the words which the Lord commanded him (Ex 19:7), and they answered “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do” (Ex 19:8); so Moses went back to the Lord and told Him their response. It became very clear very quickly that the elders had no clue what they were agreeing to; they agreed with their mouth, but their hearts were far from the Lord (see Is 29:13). The Lord said He would come in a thick cloud to speak with them (Ex 19:9) on the third day (Ex 19:11) and that they are to sanctify themselves (Ex 19:10) for the Lord. And so on the third day in the morning the Lord appears on the mount in a thick cloud, with thunder and lightening and the voice of a trumpet, and all in the camp trembled in awe (Ex 19:16).

God spoke the words of the ten commandments (Ex 20:1) by a voice (Ex 19:18, 20:22), saying “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” (Ex 20:2)

1. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Ex 20:3)
2. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” (Ex 20:4-6)
3. “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” (Ex 20:7)
4. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Ex 20:8-11)
5. “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” (Ex 20:12)
6. “Thou shalt not kill.” (Ex 20:13)
7. “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Ex 20:14)
8. “Thou shalt not steal.” (Ex 20:15)
9. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” (Ex 20:16)



10. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s.” (Ex 20:17)

All the people saw the thundering and lightening and the mountain smoking and heard the noise of the trumpet, and they stood far back from the mountain (Ex 20:18). The people said to Moses “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Ex 20:19); and Moses said to the people “Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not” (Ex 20:20).

I have thought about this passage many times over many years. Here we have a people who were in bondage in Egypt for four hundred years, and then the God of Abraham shows up with miraculous signs and wonders to redeem them out of bondage. They cannot mistake the strong and powerful hand of the Lord when it is stretched out against Egypt, and which resulted in the Israelites being set free and given many spoils. Then the Lord shows up as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead them into the wilderness, while destroying the Egyptian army that tried to pursue them across the Red Sea. The Lord descends in smoke and fire upon Mount Sinai and speaks with them with the voice of a trumpet that they can hear and understand. They cannot see Him directly, but they sure can hear Him; and what do they say? They say they do not want to hear the Lord’s voice speaking to them because they are too afraid, thinking they will die. I cannot understand how they could not want to hear the voice of the Lord for themselves. I would consider myself blessed if I could hear the voice of the Lord speaking to me; and yet I can also understand how, from their perspective, they did not want to hear His voice, for fear of being destroyed. They always wanted to be more like those around them, to fit in better with the world community in which they traveled and lived. And so God accommodated them, and spoke through Moses. Then Moses reminds them of God’s purpose for all the miracles and the smoke and the fire and for speaking directly to them, so that they would not sin against the Lord God.

God wants obedience from us more than sacrifice; and He is willing to accommodate us in our human frailties as long as we remain obedient, even if it means speaking through Moses or a prophet, and then through His Son. And yet, how I long to hear the trumpeting voice of the Lord in my ears. What a blessing it would be.

The Glory of the Lord



When Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go, God led them away from the direction of the Philistines, through the wilderness of the Red Sea (Ex 13:17-18); and the Lord went before them to lead the way, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night (Ex 13:21-22).

I have to ask why the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire? Why are they used by God here and now? I think the answer is twofold. First, as with the plagues, the pillars of cloud and fire display the awesome magnitude of God's strength and power to Israel, and to Egypt; and second, the pillars of cloud and fire also allowed God to be present and still hide His glory from the people. Only Moses was permitted to see the glory of the Lord (Ex 33:18-23) at this time, as a friend (Ex 33:11).

When the Lord first appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3:2), He only permitted Moses to see the fire that did not consume the bush; He was not able to see the Lord's glory. In fact, we have many examples in scripture where we see how the Lord hid His glory, only permitting a handful of people to see it directly throughout all of history. In Exodus 14:9-20 the pillar of cloud stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites so that they would not approach each other during the night. In Exodus 16:10 the whole congregation of the children of Israel, looking toward the wilderness, saw the glory of the Lord which appeared in the cloud. In Exodus 19:9 the Lord said to Moses that He came to him in a thick cloud so that the people may hear when He speaks with Moses, and so that they would believe him forever; and then in Exodus 19:16-19 there was thunder and lightening, and a thick cloud came upon the mount, and the voice of a loud trumpet sounded so that all the people trembled; mount Sinai was covered in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and Moses spoke and God answered him verbally. In Exodus 24:15-18 the glory of the Lord covered mount Sinai in a cloud for six days, and on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud; the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on top of the mount; and Moses went into the midst of the cloud and was on the mount forty days and forty nights. In Exodus 33:9-10 as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses; and all the people saw the cloudy pillar and worshiped from their own tent door. In Exodus 40:34-38 the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle; when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel continued their journeys; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they stayed where they were encamped. And so we see the glory of the Lord remains hidden to the children of Israel; however, they knew He was present in all the ways He showed Himself from within the midst of the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

Moreover, we see how Moses spoke with the Lord directly, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend (Ex 33:11); and so he asked Him why He has not let him know who He will send with him (Ex 33:12), and then "if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is



thy people” (Ex 33:13). God answered “My presence shall go with thee” (Ex 33:14); and Moses boldly says to the Lord “if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Ex 33:15), “For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?” (Ex 33:16); and the Lord answered “I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name” (Ex 33:17). Moses asks the Lord to go with them so it will be known that they are the Lord’s people, and the Lord agrees; so then Moses, capitalizing on his friendship and success with the Lord says to Him “I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (Ex 33:18); and the Lord responds “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex 33:19). Then the Lord tells Moses that no one can see His face and live (Ex 33:20), so the Lord will put Moses in the cleft of the rock and will cover him with His hand as He passes by (Ex 33:22), and then the Lord will take away His hand so Moses can see His back (Ex 33:23).

I find this incident to be incredibly awesome; that the Lord of all creation would even be willing to show Himself to Moses is amazing. Moses is among a very small group of men in scripture who actually get to see the glory of the Lord directly, without the clouds and smoke and fire. We can count them on the fingers of one hand. The others included Isaiah, Ezekiel, John, and possibly Paul. To make this even more incredible, the Lord describes Himself, and what He will do, as He passes by. “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance. And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.” (Ex 34:5-10).

Think about how the Lord describes Himself, as merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, and as one who is just. This is how the living God of all creation wants us to know Him. We don’t get to see the awesome miracles, or the pillar of cloud, or the pillar of fire; but we do know that in times past God spoke to the fathers through the prophets, and in all their actions on His behalf; however in these last days He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (He 1:1-2). Today God shows us His glory through His Son and in His Word. That alone is miraculous. He says “The LORD, The LORD God,



merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex 34:6) for those who seek to see His glory. If this isn’t your number one goal as a follower of Christ, then I ask that you reconsider who it is that has redeemed you.

God’s Covenant

We know from earlier that the Lord said that He would take Israel to Himself for a people, and that He would be to them a God (Ex 6:7) when He promised to redeem them with a stretched out arm (Ex 6:6) and to bring them into the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for an inheritance (ex 6:8). And then the Lord gets more specific when He said to Moses “Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee” (Ex 34:10). The Lord continued, saying that the people are to observe all which He has commanded this day (Ex 34:11); He will drive out the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite from before them (Ex 34:11); they are not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where they are going, so that they won’t become a snare to the Israelites (Ex 34:12); and they are to destroy their altars, break their images, cut down their groves (Ex 34:13) so they won’t go whoring after their gods, or sacrifice to their gods, or eat of the sacrifices to their gods (Ex 34:15), or worship their gods “for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex 34:14).

This covenant, sometimes known as the Mosaic covenant, is the first covenant made by the Lord with the children of Israel. The Lord says He will be a God to them, He will do marvels in their midst, and all the nations around will see the work of the Lord; and the children of Israel are to observe His commands, and worship only the Lord because He is a jealous God. And so Moses wrote down the words of the covenant, the ten commandments (Ex 34:27-28). Simple, and yet not so simple. All the Lord wants from us is obedience. But we cannot obey the Lord’s commands on our own. We need help. And the only way we get that help is to confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, and then we will be saved (Ro 10:9).

Conclusion

The Lord God shows His mighty hand, His power, and His mercy when He redeems Israel out of bondage in Egypt, just as He had promised to Abraham. This is an awesome series of miracles done by the Lord, using Moses and Aaron to carry them out. If you have any doubt that it was the Lord who was doing the redeeming, then read Exodus 6:6, 13:13-15,



15:13, and 34:20; and then the Lord continued to remind Israel that He was the one who redeemed them in Deuteronomy 7:8, 9:26, 13:5, 15:15, 21:8, 24:18, 2 Samuel 7:23, 1 Chronicles 17:21, and Nehemiah 1:10.

Job knew that it was the Lord who redeemed him, as we can see in verses 5:20, 6:23, and 19:25. The writers of Psalms knew that it was the Lord who was their redeemer, and that it was the Lord who redeemed Israel in the past, and it would be the Lord who will redeem them in the future; see verses 19:14, 25:22, 26:11, 31:5, 34:22, 44:26, 49:7-8, 49:15, 69:18, 71:23, 72:14, 74:2, 77:15, 78:35, 103:4, 106:10, 107:2, 11:9, 130:7-8, and 136:24. Isaiah also says that the Lord redeemed Israel in the past, and that it is the Lord who is their redeemer, and that it is the Lord who will redeem them in the future; see verses 1:17, 29:22, 35:9, 41:14, 43:1, 43:14, 44:6, 44:22-24, 47:4, 48:17, 48:20, 49:7, 49:26, 50:2, 51:11, 52:3, 52:9, 54:5, 54:8, 59:20, 60:16, 62:12, 63:4, 63:9, and 63:16. In addition, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Micah, and Zechariah also describe the Lord's redemption.

All this, of course, was a foreshadow for the redemption that would come through Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Jesus Himself says to His disciples that your redemption draws near (Lk 21:28). Paul says we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Ro 3:24); Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Ga 3:13); Christ redeemed them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Ga 4:5); in Christ we have redemption through His blood (Eph 1:7, Col 1:14); the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (Eph 1:14); and Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Tit 2:14). And the writer of Hebrews says that by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us (He 9:12).