

## Revelation of the Divine Name

Exodus 6:2-9

By [Dr. J. Ligon Duncan](#)

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If you would turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 6. Last week, we studied Exodus 5:15 through chapter 6, verse 1. And we saw the people of God responding to Moses and Aaron's announcement of God's redeeming purposes, initially with belief and with worship, but immediately following this, they experienced affliction. And it is that affliction which sets the stage for the passage that we study tonight. Obedience we said, isn't always accompanied by immediate success. The key issue in that passage is whom will Israel serve? Even in hardship, whom will Israel serve? The Lord? Or, Pharaoh? Three things stood out to us as we looked at the passage together. First of all, that God's call to serve him, isn't always easy. His call to Moses wasn't easy. His call to the people of Israel wasn't easy. Even in faithfulness to him, they were called to endure suffering, right off, in his plan to redeem them out of Egypt. Notice also that the passage emphasized that God growing Moses into a man with his own heart. Even as Moses accused the Lord, as he complained to the Lord, as he grumbled out loud to the Lord, the Lord is patient and kind in his reply. Because the Lord desires Moses to have more of his heart for his people. The Lord was far more compassionate towards his people than Moses was. Even though Moses thought of himself as being more compassionate than the Lord. And the Lord is patient in his reply to Moses. So as to cultivate that very heart for his people.

It is interesting, by the way, that throughout the Old Testament, God often calls upon prophets to undergo the same pains which he has visiting on His people as He calls them into ministry to His people. So that they are not, as it were, dry land sailors, so that they themselves, have to be forced with the challenge to trust God when it is difficult to believe him, when it doesn't look possible, to endure for him in the midst of difficulty. So here is our situation. The foreman and presumably the people themselves are now blaming Moses for their increased hardship, and they are rejecting his leadership. Moses has accused God of unfaithfulness and of doing evil to his own people. We don't need to underestimate what Moses is said in the forms of questions to the Lord. They are very strong words, indeed. But the Lord has patiently reasserted his purposes and indeed he has claimed that Moses is not only going to allow Israel to leave Egypt, but that he is going to order Israel to leave Egypt by the compulsion of

God's mighty hand. What is going to happen next? Well, let's see. Beginning in Exodus chapter 6, in verse 2. This is God's word.

God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord. And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God almighty. But by my name, Lord, I did not make myself known to them. And I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. And furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore, to the sons of Israel, I am the Lord. And I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people. And I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you, for a possession. I am the Lord." So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel. But they did not listen to Moses, on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.

And thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired, and inerrant word. May He add His blessing to it. Let's pray.

*Our Lord and our God, this word, written so long ago about an event that occurred even longer ago, is not simply history. It is Your word for us. By Your grace, help us to hear it, expectantly. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Among the interesting news reports that came out yesterday, and perhaps you heard it, was one that indicated that the democratic senate leadership came within three days of holding a meeting with our former president in the midst of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, in which they planned to ask him to resign. Even as the republican leadership had done a number of years ago with the former president, Richard Nixon. Interesting. Just a few days can make a tremendous difference. Well, Moses was way beyond that point, already. The foreman had already asked for his resignation. The meeting had already been held. That is where we are, friends. The foremen have met, they want a resignation, they want it on the table yesterday. If ever there was a time when a prophet needed a word of reassurance from the Lord, it was now. "Man's extremity," Matthew Henry once said, "is God's opportunity of helping and saving." Well, now, is the time, Lord. Henry goes on to say, "now that the affair has come to an crisis, and things are as bad as they can be, Pharaoh is at the height of his pride, and Israel is at the depth of her misery, now is God's time to appear." And that is, of course, precisely what he does. What does God do in this situation? He continues a conversation with Moses. Now think about that. What does God do in answer to this hour of crisis? He continues a conversation with Moses. And the words that he speaks are exceedingly precious. Not only to him, not only to Israel, but to us.

In fact, we are going to see that once we really understand verse 3, that the word that Moses was given from God is precisely the word that God gives to us in Jesus Christ. I want you to see three things that God says and does in this passage. Or three things that we learn.

First of all, God identifies him, himself, in a unique way. He reaffirms his absolute covenant commitment to Israel. And he reemphasizes his compassion to his people. That is the first thing that he does. Secondly, God makes an amazing seven part promise. He gives it to Moses to deliver to the people. And thirdly, and interestingly, Moses faithfully delivers the message, but the people stunningly don't listen. Those are the three things that I would like to look with you for a few moments tonight.

### **I. God reveals Himself to Moses.**

First, let's look at verses 2-5. Here we see the Lord reveal himself. We see the Lord recommit himself. And we see him announce again, just like he had in Exodus 2 his concern, his compassion for the sufferings of Israel. In this hour of crisis, what does God do? He does this. He says something to Moses. He says, let me tell you who I am. Let Me reveal Myself to you more gloriously than before. Let Me remind you that though I am the very same one who spoke to the Patriarchs, I am more glorious than you have ever known. And let Me reiterate that I care for you more than you could ever understand. Isn't it interesting that in the hour of crisis, God comes with a message about Himself.

Now friends, if that were a human, that would be arrogant to the point of unbelief. I mean we have all heard the story of the guy who takes the girl out on the date and all he talks about is his work, and then all he talks about is some project that he is working on. And he says, Oh, but enough about that project, let's talk about me. That type of self-centeredness is mind-boggling in humans, but when God begins the work of salvation in His people, He always begins by revealing Himself. And before Moses, and before the people of Israel are going to be capable of going through what He is going to call them through, they need to know who the Lord is. And that is precisely where he begins.

God continues this conversation with Moses. It has begun in verse 1, and he begins it with an important declaration, I am the Lord. This is the royal self designation. This is God's identification of himself. I am the Lord. By the way, that is the same formula that Jesus uses multiple times in the Gospel of John. I am the good shepherd. I am the gate. I am the door. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the bread of heaven. I am the living water. God is announcing something to Moses about Himself. When God starts telling you who He is, listen carefully, something is up. And that is exactly what is happening here. God is telling Moses about Himself, because something very big is up.

And then God says something to Moses, that may seem initially confusing to you. But it turns out to have great weight and significance. Look with me at verse 3. He says, I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. Now what in the world does He mean? Does He mean that His name, the Lord, Yaweh, or what we often transliterate through the Septuagint as Jehovah, does He mean that, that name was not known to the Patriarchs? Certainly not, certainly not. The name is used for instance in Genesis chapter 4, verse 26, "and then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." Abraham uses the name in Genesis 12, verse 8. Even Moses' mother's name is a derivative of that name of the Lord. Surely what God is saying is not, well, the Patriarchs didn't know this name. They hadn't heard the sound of the name. And now I am going to tell you the sound of the name for the first time. No, that is not what He means. Does He mean that they did not understand the full significance of that great name? Yes. Absolutely. They did not understand the full significance of that great name. John Currid puts it this way: "The Patriarchs did not fully experience the essential nature and power of the name Yaweh. As we have seen that name reflects a God who fulfills his promises. The promise of a coming Exodus and redemption from slavery, was not fulfilled during the time of the Patriarchs but belonged to a distant future. And so, when this passage in Exodus speaks of God's name, the Lord name, refers to His revealing his essence. Yahweh was now to show that He was and is the Lord. That He is the one who is faithful and unchanging in fulfilling his promises."

And the place of this verse in the scheme of God's revelation as we see it is this. Not that now for the first time, the name as a sound was declared, first time we had heard the word, the Lord. No. But that now for the first time, the essential significance of the name is to be made known. Alec Motyr puts it this way: "God sent Moses to Egypt to declare a nature, not a name." The name they knew, the nature, well they were about to have their minds blown. And that is precisely what God is saying in verse 3. Buckle your seat belt, Moses, I am about to blow your mind. You have no idea how glorious I am, how powerful I am, how faithful I am, you have no idea of what is in store.

Now, by the way, this isn't the only time that the prophets of the Lord do this in the Old Testament. In Jeremiah, for instance, 16:21, Jeremiah says that he makes known the name of the Lord to Israel. Well, obviously, Israel had known without doubt the name of the Lord for many years before Jeremiah arrived on the scene. He is one of the latter prophets. But what is he doing? He is making known the character, the nature, the essence of the Lord to them in a way that they have not understood before. That is precisely what Moses is doing here. And, if again, we turn to John, we can find Jesus in John 17, verse 6 saying that he is going to manifest God's name, his nature, His character, His actions, His heart, His essence to His disciples. Now again, the point is not that they haven't heard God's name spoken in their ears before. But that He is going to reveal God to them in such a way which transcends anything that they have experienced in the past. That is precisely what is happening here.

Now, I want to say in addition to that though, if you look at the end of verse 2 and verse 3, that God, the Lord, connects Himself explicitly to the God of the Patriarchs. Moses' message is not, hey, you all have heard of the God of the Patriarchs, we are done with him, we are moving on to the new and improved model. That is not Moses' message. Moses message is that the God who is speaking to him, and to his people in captivity is the same one and the same God who spoke to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In other words, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Israel, all worshipped the same God. That is fundamental to understanding Moses' point in this passage.

Let me also say, if you look at verse 3, that the formula, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, is a formula used frequently in the first five books of the Bible. The first time that it is used, is in Genesis chapter 50, verse 24 and that verse is a promise of the coming Exodus. And that means that this verse in Exodus, is the fulfillment of that promise that had been made in Genesis 50, verse 24 to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the Lord who is going to fulfill the promise that had been made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In verse 4, the Lord declares that he remembers the covenant, He remembers the covenant that He established, that he confirmed with the Patriarchs, to give them the land. His people may have forgotten it. They clearly have under their burdens. They had given up hope. They have forgotten the promise that he has made. They had given up on it, at least, but not the Lord. He remembers it.

And the Lord indicates that he is about to act now. I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, he says in verse 5. Because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant. When God says he remembered the covenant, he doesn't mean that he forgot it. He doesn't mean that it had been temporarily out of his mind. In the Old Testament, when God tells you that he remembers something, He is telling you that He is going to act. To remember, for the Lord, is to take action for His people. It is not an act of having a fuzzy memory restored. It is an act of God announcing to His people that He is prepared to spring into motion for them in fulfillment of the commitments that He had previously made. John Currid puts it this way: "The final phrase, I have remembered My covenant, means that God is ready to put the covenant and its promises into effect." In other words, He is prepared to act and to do so soon.

You know, when we get into a pickle, usually what we want is a way out. We want a plan. We want a strategy. We want to see light at the end of the tunnel. We want something practical, you know, something nuts and bolts that will get us from A to Z, out of the mess that we are in. Isn't it interesting that in this pickle, God stops and He says, Moses, let me tell you about Myself. And my friends, that is exactly what God wants us to know. When we get into a pickle, though we want a way out, a plan, a strategy, God wants us to know who He is, instead. Salvation begins with knowing who God is. It also ends with knowing who God is,

but that is not the thrust here.

The point is, salvation begins with knowing who God is and so when he is preparing to do a great work, he begins by teaching his people about himself. That is why the most important thing that you could learn in your Bible study is who your God is.

For example, you are a parent, and of course, my children are perfect, as you saw tonight. Ever had trouble with a child and you would like to have a strategy? You would like to have a plan. A plan that will work. And the most important thing for you to know is who God is. Or, you are a husband, and you are a pretty lousy one at that, then you would like to have a plan, you would like to have a strategy. You would like to get some chips, some points in your column. But the most important thing for you to know is who God is. You have lost your job and you would like to have a plan, a strategy, a way out. But the most important thing is for you to know God, to know who He is, to know what He says about Himself.

That is always the starting point with God's dealings with us, and that is exactly where God starts here with Moses. And He tells us something absolutely glorious about Himself. He tells Moses that He is going to reveal Himself to be the Lord in the Exodus in a way which will show His nature that transcends everything that all the Patriarchs before Him had experienced themselves. Listen to what Alec Motyr says beautifully about this passage: "The Exodus is on large scale, what Mt. Moriah, the sacrifice of Isaac, was in the miniature. The same God who provided the ram, provided also the Passover lamb. There is no further truth about God ever to be revealed." Listen to that. There is no further truth about God ever to be revealed, even we who have been permitted to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, see only the truth of the Exodus. His Exodus, which He would accomplish at Jerusalem. And when in God's mercy, we meet the Lord in the air, it will be to discover, that once again, God has done that which His name declares. He has gone down to Egypt to redeem His people, for this is His name forever, and this is His memorial name to all generations. Fairly glorious, isn't it? And that is how God begins to deal with Moses in this time of crisis. Moses, let me tell you who I am. Let me tell you about my name. Let me tell you that I am the same, but I am glorious than you have ever stood before, and let me tell you that I care for you more than you could ever possibly know. That is how he begins, first with himself.

## **II. God's promises.**

Then if you look at verses 6-8, he moves on to his promises, and isn't that the way that God always works? First His person, then His promises. There is the ground of your hope, there is the ground of your faith. First His person, then His promises. Here the Lord gives a seven-fold pledge to the sons of Israel. Again, God says to Moses, listen to My promises, Moses, first for yourself, then for the

people. Listen to My promises, Moses, first for yourself, and then for the people. If you will look at verse 6, the very beginning you will see that word, therefore, that word, therefore, in the Old Testament often introduces a divine command, or a directive. It does so here.

Note also that God once again uses the royal formula of self-identification. I am the Lord. Do you know where else He uses that? Been meditating on Exodus 19, or Exodus 20 recently? Before the Lord will give the Ten Commandments, He will announce this. God spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord, your God. And then He adds these words, borrowed right from this passage, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of slavery. I am the Lord. So He announces Himself again, and then He commences with seven "I wills." They are all in the first person singular. By the way, Jesus does the same thing in the Gospels. Have you ever studied the "I wills" of Christ? A few things would be more encouraging to see what Christ has said He will do for His people. Here God gives us seven "I wills."

First, I will bring you out. In other words, the Lord himself, not Pharaoh, not Moses, and certainly not the people who are despondent and downcast, and faithless, but the Lord himself. I will bring you out. God himself, will come to the rescue of his people.

Secondly, I will deliver you. This is that great Hebrew word, I will free you, I will save you, I will rescue you. God the Savior will come and He will rescue His people.

Thirdly, I will redeem you. This must have been exceedingly precious when the Hebrews paused long enough to listen, because God is saying, I will be your kinsmen redeemer and I will redeem you out of the hand of the enemy Myself. You know, in America - I am sure that our British friends sort of get a kick out of this - we love in our genealogy to find that we are tied in to some glorious line of the past. You know, we are all descendants from Robert the Bruce, somehow, you know. Can you imagine Israel after this declaration of God? God saying, "You know your family, and I am going to redeem you as a kinsmen redeemer." Can you imagine the Israelite? Well, let me tell you about my family tree. Let me tell you how mine ties into God. I am your kinsmen redeemer. I am going to redeem you just like the Goel says in the laws that I give. I am going to redeem you. How precious that must have been when Israel had the ears to hear, God proclaims his family relationship to Israel. And declares Israel family relationship to himself.

Then in verse 7, he says fourthly, I will take you to Me, as a people. This is the beginning of the Emanuel principle. God with us, the very heart of the covenant and he says.

Furthermore, fifthly, I will be your God. And He announces having said that He

will be their God, that they will know that He is the Lord their God who brought them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and this is the beginning of that great credal statement of Israel's faith, which is appended to the beginning of the Ten Commandments. That is who I am. I am the Lord, who redeemed you. I am the Lord, who brought you out. I am the Lord who rescued you from Egypt, and brought you out from slavery.

Sixth, I will bring you to the land, a central promise of God's covenant promise to Abraham, and notice how God puts it here. I will bring you to the land, which I swore. Now that is shocking enough, to hear God swearing to His people, but friends, the way that it reads is even more shocking. Literally it says, I will bring you to the land, that I lifted my hand and took a pledge to give to Abraham. You see the picture? God almighty standing in the dock and saying, I swear by Me, that I will give you the land. See how far God is going to assure His people of His purposes for them.

And then seventh, I will give it to you. The Exodus event is about to come to pass for the Lord to remember, is for the Lord to act. Faith rests in the promises of God. And so we ought to make a study of those promises, if we want to have comfort in those promises.

Are you wrestling to know tonight, are you wrestling to know God's purposes for you, God's promises for you? Then stop. Be still. See the Lord. Study his promises, meditate on them. Realize what he has said to you, and be comforted.

### **III. The people reject Moses offer of deliverance.**

And then in verse 9, we see this sorry scene. Moses delivers the Gospel, but the people don't listen. So often, friends, the circumstances of our burdens, crowd out our comforts. Like so many of us, the people didn't listen to Moses. Moses faithfully spoke but their pain drowned out the word of comfort from God that he had been given to deliver. These people were both physically beaten down, and frankly, they had lost heart. There is a lesson, I suspect even in the connection between the weariness of the body and the weariness of the soul. But whatever the case, their oppression was heavy, and it is described in amazing terms here. We are told that they did not listen on account of their shortness of breath.

Maybe you know what that is like. Maybe you know what it is like to be so under his hand that you are out of breath, you can't breathe. Man, you just can't catch your breath. And when you can't catch your breath, it is pretty hard to listen to sermon. Have you ever been grasping for breath and you don't think the next one is coming? It is hard to concentrate on anything else. God is gracious as He describes the reason why they don't hear.

But let me ask you again, are you at the end of your rope? Are you so restless

that you can't pause to hear Him? Then that is the most important time that you do. What is keeping you from hearing the word of the Lord's grace? It doesn't matter. There is nothing more needful than that you do just that. There was book written not too long ago, called *Too Busy Not to Pray*. You know the implication is we are pretty busy people, we are so busy sometimes that we don't get around to praying. The premise of the book is the other way around. You are too busy not to stop and do that. Well, if that is true, how much more is it true that you are too busy, you are under too much not to be still and know that he is the Lord. To know what that means, and to meditate on His promises. Because when God prepares to save his people, He reveals Himself, and He makes promises, and then He says, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. And that is exactly what He will do for Israel here, and that is exactly what He will do for you as you trust in Him. Let's pray.

O Lord, we bless You, we honor You, we exalt You. And we ask that in the weakness of our faith, by your grace, You would pick us up, and You would give us our breath back, and You would enable us to see You and to trust You, and to revel in You. And to hope in You, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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