

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 6:9-12, 28-7:13

“The Problem With Miracles”

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Exodus 6:9-12, 28-7:13

Verse 6:9

Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.

- Moses' first visit to Pharaoh had produced less than desirable results. Pharaoh had decided not to honor YHWH's request that he let the Israelites go. He had concluded that the Israelites were lazy, since they asked to take a three-day's journey into the wilderness to worship God. He ordered that they be made to collect their own straw for brick making but that the daily brick quotas not be reduced. This increased the hardship of the Hebrew slaves. When the slave foremen learned that this, "get your own straw order," was the result of Moses' visit to Pharaoh, they blamed Moses for making their plight in Egypt worse.
- Thus, for two reasons the slaves would not listen to Moses: They were discouraged that he had not delivered on God's promise to set them free and now their plight was even more desperate and harder to bear. They no longer believed that God would act on their behalf to set them free, and they no longer regarded Moses as trustworthy.

Verse 6:10-11

Then YHWH said to Moses, "Go tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country."

- Despite the Israelites depression and lack of faith in both Moses and YHWH, YHWH is still determined to act on their behalf according to his plan.
- Despite their lack of faith in both God and Moses, Moses is to continue to work the plan. He is still to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelite slaves.

Verse 6:12

But Moses said to YHWH, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?”

- God is still confident that his plan will work, However, Moses is not. When ordered to continue to work the plan by going to Pharaoh again, Moses objects saying that if his own people will not listen to him there is no reason to think that Pharaoh will.
- The situation is complicated by the fact that Moses speaks with “faltering lips.” This phrase seems to indicate that Moses had some sort of speech impediment, perhaps stuttering. Although, it could mean that he was afraid of Pharaoh and that his fear was evidenced in his shaking speech when he stood before Pharaoh.

(6:13-27 contains a genealogy of Moses’ and Aaron’s descent. The story resumes in verse 28.)

Verse 6:28

Now when YHWH spoke to Moses in Egypt, he said to him, “I AM YHWH. Tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, everything I tell you.”

- God still remains adamant. Moses is to work the plan. He is to go to Pharaoh and tell him what God says.

Verse 6:29

But Moses said to YHWH, “Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?”

- Moses continues to insist that God’s plan cannot work because of his speech problem.

Verse 7:1-2

Then YHWH said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country.”

- God speaks to Pharaoh and his people through his prophet Moses. Moses will now be a model of God. He will be like God. Moses will speak directly to Aaron and Aaron will speak to the people. Thus the relationship between Moses and Aaron becomes a picture of how God speaks to his people.
- The message remains the same even though the peoples’ attitude has changed. Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free.

Verse 7:3-4

“But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites.

- God now lays out exactly what he will do to make Pharaoh bend to his will.
- First, He will “harden Pharaoh’s heart.” The phrase means that God will close Pharaoh’s mind to the truth and make it impossible for Pharaoh to respond to his demands. He will make it impossible for Pharaoh to hear Moses’ request.
- Second, He will “lay his hand on Egypt.” He will call judgment down on Egypt because of their treatment of the Hebrews.
- Third, He will bring the Hebrews out of Egypt.
- God’s intention is to follow his plan regardless of any opposition to it.

Verse 7:5

“And the Egyptians will know that I am YHWH when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.”

- The outcome of God’s faithfulness to his plan will be to reveal to the Egyptians who he is and the extent of his power. The Egyptians will know who YHWH is when he breaks Pharaoh’s will and forces him to submit to the plan of God.

Verse 7:6-7

Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

- Moses and Aaron did exactly as YHWH commanded them to do. Despite everything, they did as God instructed them to do.

Verse 7:8-9

YHWH said to Moses and Aaron, “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.”

- Moses and Aaron are told what to do when Pharaoh demands a miracle to convince him of YHWH’s power. Aaron is to throw his staff on the ground and it will become a snake.

Verse 7:10-12a

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as YHWH commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same thing by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake.

- It is important to note that Pharaoh's men were able to duplicate the miracle that Aaron did. Aaron acted through the power of God. Pharaoh's men acted by some other source, but by appearance, the result was exactly the same.
- As a result, Pharaoh was not impressed with Aaron's miracle. YHWH, by whose power Aaron claimed to act, was no more powerful than the magicians of Egypt.

Verse 12b

But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

- As they watched the staff snakes, Aaron's snake ate up all the others. This was a sign that even though the magicians could reproduce the miracle, God's power as displayed by Aaron's obedience, was still greater, for his snake destroyed the others.

Verse 13

Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as YHWH had said.

- None-the-less, just as God had said it would be, Pharaoh refused God's request. He denied the Hebrews permission to leave Egypt.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Problem With Miracles*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)