

LECTURE XIII

SCRIPTURE READING: Exodus a revelation of God
EXODUS 3.

INTRODUCTION.

The approach I have adopted in these studies has been different from the usual way in which Exodus is studied.

Instead of looking at Exodus chronologically, we have been looking at the main themes that emerge those **themes that fit it into the big picture, the story line of the Bible.**

Let me remind you again that we must never approach the Bible as if it were a collection of books randomly thrown together.

There is a unity in the Bible.

From Genesis to Revelation we see how God set in motion a plan to redeem mankind from sin and Satan.

That is the plot and every book of the Bible serves a particular purpose in God's revelation.

Each book contributes to our understanding of that plan.

That plan was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ and the church, the people of God.

That plan will find its consummation [completion] at the end of this age with the return of Jesus Christ when every knee will bow before him and every tongue confess that he is Lord – some will do this willingly with great joy and others with reluctance and fear and he will set up a kingdom of peace, of goodness and joy.

The message of the Bible is that it is God who has done something to create this perfect society, **called the kingdom of God** or a new heaven and a new earth – but that plan is realized in Christ alone for he alone has dealt with the cause of wars, greed, corruption, sickness, poverty and man's inhumanity to man – the cause is sin and Satan.

At the heart of this stands the cross, the symbol of suffering and shame, a scandal to the world, but Christians glory in the cross, they are proud of it because, as Paul writes,

1CO 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

But let us return to Exodus.

Now we have seen that the focus of Exodus is redemption – here we see the essential elements of salvation – the gospel.

Today I am going to look at Exodus from another perspective.

What I want to look at is what Exodus teaches us about God, for ultimately, **Exodus is really about God**; even the redemption is about God.

Just think for a moment of the situation Israel found herself in.

God had revealed himself to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

And then they moved to Egypt – where they stayed for 400 years, 200 years of which they were in slavery to Pharaoh.

The book of Exodus begins with their terrible plight. *EX 1:8 Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." EX 1:11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.*

What sort of society surrounded them?

Egypt was a deeply religious society – religion permeated everything they did – politically, socially and economically – there was no division between spiritual and material – spiritual and secular were not only linked but was a unit.

The ruler, called Pharaoh was considered to be an incarnation of the gods; one of his titles was the name of one of their gods – Horus.

They believed in a multiplicity of gods, each over a particular aspect of life and death.

Now how did this affect Israel?

Well, Israel, living apart from Egypt still worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When God appeared to Moses He said,

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Obviously, Moses, although brought up as an Egyptian was taught by his mother about the true God.

And this is what we read in verse 15 of chapter 3

EX 3:15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD,ⁿ the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation."

But there were **two problems**; firstly it seems that some Israelites were influenced by the religion of the Egyptians as is clear from what Joshua said in 24:14

JOS 24:14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

The **other problem** was that many of those who believed in the true God lost faith in him because for 400 years he had not spoken to them.[1652 – 2004 = 352 yrs]

Did he even care about them any longer?

Were the gods of the Egyptians not more powerful than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Look at the prosperity and power of Egypt and look at the oppression they lived under – did that not prove that their God was not as powerful as the gods of Egypt?

It was at this stage that Israel had to learn something about their God, the only God.

They had to understand that he was not like the gods of the nations.

It was not merely that God was more powerful than their gods, but that he was the only God, the true God and that the gods of the nations were nothing, they were the creation of their worshipers.

That is what Exodus is about – a revelation of the only true God.

Here God revealed some very important truths about himself – truths that I believe are particularly relevant in our society today for we too live in a society that is characterized by a multiplicity of religions, beliefs, gods and values – call it a pluralistic society.

There is one important difference however, religion no longer makes an impact on the lives of people, we may be religious but we are also very secular.

We are living in a time when the church, when we Christians need more than anything to rediscover who it is that we worship.

Like Israel, we need to learn some vital truths about the God we claim to worship.

What we learn about God in Exodus: -

God is the sovereign ruler over the nations.

God IS.
God is Holy.
God is Love.

God is sovereign and controls all things, including history.

This is the message from **Genesis 1** – God created all things – he is shown to be both creator and sustainer/ruler over all things.

He is involved in every aspect of life, whether in judgment or grace, whether in the lives of individuals or nations.

We saw that in the story of **Joseph** – how God used the jealousy of his brothers to save this family from famine and how God planned for them to settle in Egypt.

Joseph was aware that everything that happened was part and parcel of God's purpose for he told his *brothers* ²⁰ *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

Even the slavery of the Israelites was part of God's plan for He revealed this to Abraham many years before.

And again, we see God controlling everything in Exodus.

In **Exodus 1**, God used the Hebrew midwives to save the Jewish male babies from death.

Ex 1: 17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

EX 1:20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

God even used Pharaoh's daughter to protect and raise Moses as her own son.

EX 2:1 Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, ² and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. ³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

EX 2:5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. ⁶ She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

EX 2:7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

EX 2:8 "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. ¹⁰ When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses,ⁿ saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Throughout Exodus we are shown that God is the unseen controller of all history and all circumstances.

He stands above the forces of nature.

This is shown so clearly in YAHWEH'S confrontation with the gods of Egypt.

Dramatically, convincingly God shows that the pagan gods are nothing – they are powerless – they only have the power that men attribute to them.

That is the meaning and significance of the **plagues**, which must not be viewed as a few random miracles.

These plagues struck at the very heart of Egypt's faith.

The Egyptians believed that each of the many gods controlled vital aspects of Egyptian existence from life to death.

Now, in a series of **10 judgments**, the gods of the pagans were challenged by the Lord and defeated.

In Pharaoh's court Moses grew up with all the privileges of royalty, including the best education possible and was equipped for leadership.

So, in a sense the Pharaoh was equipping the man who would deliver the Hebrews from slavery.

Think of the irony of this.

It is obvious from verse 11 that Moses discovered that he was a Hebrew.

How did he discover this?

Obviously from his mother who was employed unknowingly by the princes – so, she taught him about the God of Israel.

Did he leave the palace and go to live with his people?

We have the answer in Hebrews 11

(Hebrews 11:23) By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

(Hebrews 11:24) By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (Hebrews 11:25) choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

(Hebrews 11:26) He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

(Hebrews 11:27) By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Read 2:11f.

He was so incensed at what was happening to his people that he tried to take matters into his own hands and as a result he had flee from Egypt and take refuge in Midian where he started life all over again.

He was then 40 years of age.

We know very little about the next 40 years, except that he married Zipporah and they had two sons and became a shepherd.

Chapter 2 closes with these words,

EX 2:23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

To all intents and purposes the covenant promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were in jeopardy. [Genesis 12, 15, 17f]

Now let us read chapter 3.

Moses clearly had a remarkable encounter with God at *Mount Horeb* [*Mount Sinai* – two names used interchangeably].

He sees a fire in a bush, but the bush is not consumed – he can't understand this and so goes to investigate, and suddenly he hears his name called.

And as he approaches the bush, God tells him not to come closer – to take his sandals off because he is in the presence of the Holy God.

Moses was not yet ready to draw close to God as he would later be able to.

God reminds Moses that he was the God of his father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and of Jacob.

God tells him he has seen the misery of his people in Egypt and he was now going to do something about it.

And he is calling Moses to go and confront Pharaoh – he is to tell him to let God's people go. Poor Moses.

You can imagine how he felt.

Why did God not call him while he was still young?

He could have led an uprising against the Egyptians – and perhaps they could have succeeded under his leadership.

In response to God's call, **Moses** asks God **two questions**:

➤ **First question:**

"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

This was not an existential question but one of utter disbelief – 'needing to find himself'.

Here he was 80 years of age, in obscurity and yet God was calling him to confront the most powerful ruler of the most advanced civilization of the world.

*To put this in modern day language:
'Go to Pharaoh! 'You must be joking!'
'Who am I to do this?'
'I am not qualified.'*

He felt himself ill equipped to lead the Hebrews from oppression.

He was only too aware of his weaknesses.

EX 4:10 Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."

EX 4:13 But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

'I'm not your man.'

'There must be someone better equipped than I am,'

But what Moses had to realise was the fact that God did not call him because of his natural abilities or because he was a natural leader.

In fact, it was because he was weak and lacked confidence that God called him.

God answers: ***'I am with you'.***

It was God who would deliver his people.

EX 3:12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, youⁿ will worship God on this mountain."

'You will accomplish what I have commanded you – that will be proof that I am with you.'

- The **second question** Moses asked God brings us to what is surely the most important text in the Bible for understanding the meaning of the name of God - YHWH

EX 3:13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

This brings us to the main theme of Exodus, it is about God – a revelation of who God is and we will see more about this next week.

Now you know that in Biblical times, **names were important** – a person's name often told you something of that person's character and even purpose.

That is why often God changed people's names – pointing to their new identity and calling.

Now the Bible tells us that God revealed himself – his nature, his character in the names he chose for himself.

God did not choose names for himself at random – he chose names for the sake of revealing things about himself that will deepen our love for him and strengthen our faith in him.

The most important name for God in the O.T. is the name that in our English versions never gets translated – whenever you see the word **LORD** in capital letters it is the Hebrew name – which cannot even be pronounced because it is in consonants only – **YHWH** – but can be pronounced something like ***Yahweh***.

The Jews came to consider this word with such reverence that they never spoke it for fear of taking the Lord's name in vain.

So whenever they came to this name in their reading, they pronounced the word '*adonai*' which means '*my lord*'.

The English versions follow this – they translate the proper name YAHWEH with the word LORD.

YAHWEH is God's proper name in Hebrew.

Its importance can be seen in the fact that it occurs almost 7000 times in the O.T – more than 3 times as often as the simple word 'God' 'Elohim'.

It is in this text – in Exodus 3 verses 14-15 that God explains what his name means, and it tells us some important truths about God.

Moses asks God what he must say if the reluctant Israelites want to know who sent him to Egypt to deliver them.

What they were actually asking: *'Exactly what kind of God is the God of our ancestors?'* [verse 13]

Notice that God gives Moses 2 answers to his question:

Verse 14 – I AM WHO I AM - I AM has sent you.

And in **verse 15** – we read,

EX 3:15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, [YAHWEH] ⁿ the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Obviously then Yahweh means '*I AM WHO I AM*' – God uses the name *Yahweh* and "*I AM*" interchangeably.

In fact, the name Yahweh and the name I AM are built on the same Hebrew word.

If this is God's personal name then it is vital for us to understand what it means for it has important implications for the people of God, for it tells us something about God.

So what was God telling Moses and the children of Israel about himself when he identified himself as 'YAHWEH', 'I AM WHAT I AM'?

The pronunciation of "**Yahweh**" is typically rendered as:

YAH-way

(with the first syllable like "YAH" in "yacht" and the second like "way")

Important Background:

The name **Yahweh** (Hebrew: יהוה, the Tetragrammaton – YHWH) is the personal name of God revealed in the Old Testament, especially in Exodus 3:14–15. However, its **original pronunciation is uncertain** because ancient Hebrew was written without vowels, and the Jewish tradition eventually **stopped vocalizing the name** out of reverence.

Instead, Jewish readers would say "**Adonai**" (meaning "Lord") when reading YHWH aloud.

Why "Yahweh"?

Scholars reconstructed the pronunciation "Yahweh" based on early Christian writings, ancient transliterations, and linguistic analysis. It's considered the **most likely** approximation of how the name was originally pronounced, though certainty is impossible.

Common Misunderstanding: Jehovah

- The name "**Jehovah**" is a much later hybrid form, resulting from inserting the vowels of "Adonai" into the consonants YHWH.
- It became widespread in English through the King James tradition but is not historically accurate.

Summary:

"**Yahweh**" is likely pronounced **YAH-way**, and while we can't be 100% certain, it's the scholarly consensus for the most authentic vocalization of God's name in the Hebrew Bible.

Let us imagine the conversation between Moses and God goes something like this,

'Who shall I say sends me?'

'What name shall I give?'

God responds: *'Tell them "I AM" has sent you.'*

Moses thinks to himself: *'What sort of name is that – I Am?'*

So, he says what he is thinking; *'You are what...?'*

God responds, *'I am what I am!'*

Moses does not yet understand but there comes a time when you stop asking God to explain himself – He will explain it all at the right time – that much Moses knows.

Now let's be quite clear about this, God was not just trying to be difficult or playing word games with Moses, he was not trying to confuse him.

So, what was God really saying about himself?

1. In the first place: God was defining himself in his own terms.

God was in effect saying: *'I am who I say I am, who I reveal myself to be – not what you think I am or imagine what I am.'*

This is the infinite explaining himself to the finite.

You see, it seems to me that we must consider this statement, this name, in the context of the culture in which the children of Israel has been living in for over 400 years.

What had they seen?

Well, they knew that Egypt was a very religious civilization – religion was not on the periphery of their society – it was at the very centre – it was the very foundation of Egyptian life – it was the glue that bound them together – it permeated their lives.

They believed in the existence of many gods, each one controlling some facet of life.

As they saw it, every detail of life, from the predictable flooding of the Nile to the chance death of a cat – depended entirely on the attitude of the gods.

Basic to this was their view of the Pharaoh.

They saw him as the living incarnation of the god **Horus** – in other words, they viewed him as a god-king.

The Pharaoh was responsible for maintaining the life-giving Nile and the daily rising of the sun.

In other words, they identified creation with their gods – their gods were located within creation itself – as part of it.

Now it was in this context that we must understand what God was saying about himself.

He was in fact drawing a contrast between himself and the gods of the pagans.

He was stating as forcefully as possible, *"I am not like those gods."*

It was not that he was just more powerful than the pagan gods – it was that he was in another category altogether.

Grudem: *'God's being is qualitatively different. No limitations or imperfections of creation should be projected onto our thoughts of God.'*

He is Creator – he created all things – he controls all things – he is not part of creation – he is apart from creation – he is not an extension of creation – there is nothing in all creation that can even compare to him.

He is Eternal – he not only exists, but he has also always existed and will always exist.

Piper: *Push back with me before there was any earth or any solar system or galaxies or universe at all. Push back in your imagination to when there was only God. Then, if you can, push back behind God. Where did he come from? How did he get to be the way he is? If you asked me how I got to be the way I am, I would answer that my father and mother gave me a set of genes and they reared me a certain way and I have been surrounded by thousands of influences in my environment—that's how I got to be the way I am. But when we ask God how he got to be who he is, he answers, I AM WHO I AM. In other words, nobody gave me a set of genes. Nobody and no power brought me into existence or shaped my personality. I had no beginning. There is no reality outside myself that did not come from me. And so there is no force or influence upon my character and power except what comes from me and is controlled by me. I am utterly absolute. Behind me there is no reality.*

And we can go on.

He is Sovereign – he rules.

That was what **the plagues** were all about [*we will look more specifically at the significance of these plagues*].

God gave both the Egyptians and the Hebrews a dramatic and powerful demonstration that all the Egyptian gods were powerless – in fact, they were nothing:

He is self-existent.
He is unchangeable.
He is independent of anything outside of himself.
He is self-sufficient.

The important lesson that Israel had to learn was this – that there can be no comparisons.

That is what the **second command** is about.

EX 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them;

The moment we make comparisons or try to form a picture God we have insulted God.

That was the lesson God was teaching them when he revealed himself as **Holy** – not just pure, but totally other.

It was what God said to Isaiah 600 years later,

ISA 40:18 To whom, then, will you compare God?

What image will you compare him to?

*ISA 40:19 As for an idol, a craftsman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.*

ISA 40:21 Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

*ISA 40:22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.*

*He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*

ISA 40:25 "To whom will you compare me?

Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

ISA 40:26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens:

*Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one by one,
and calls them each by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.*

That is the God of Christianity.

Implications.

- When God says, '*I am what I am*', we are warned against the idea that everybody else's God is as good as everybody else's.

There is only 'One' true God and that is the God who calls himself 'Yahweh'.

Acts 17 – the unknown God – he proclaims the God of the Bible, he begins in Creation, at the beginning.

- It is also a warning against viewing God in the images of our cultural gods – a God who fits our own selfish and sinful desires a God whom we can manipulate to fit our agendas.

God is not user friendly.

He is not 'tame'.

Do not take him lightly.
Do not be familiar with him.

He is not consumer orientated.

He cannot be manipulated like a genie in a lamp.

Is that not the problem in the church today?

We have shrunk God to fit our own understanding of who we are, rather than understanding ourselves in the light of who God has revealed himself to be.

We have created a god in our own image and as the Psalmist writes, we become like the gods we worship.

He is who he is and we are to submit to this God above us and beyond us otherwise we lose direction and purpose – we try to find meaning and purpose in those things that were never meant to give us meaning and purpose.

And yet, he has chosen to reveal himself to us, to make himself known in his actions in space and time – he has come down to our level – the infinite communicating with the finite.

This brings us to consider the second thing God was saying about himself.

2. He is the God who reveals himself in his actions and words.

In the first place: God was defining himself in his own terms.

Well, of course we know that creation reveals something of God's glory and majesty as we see in **Psalm 8**. [Tells us something about God]

But primarily we see what sort of God he is in his **work of redemption** and that work of redemption has been worked out in human history.

God has not revealed abstract ideas about himself; he has shown us what he is like in his acts in history.

God is known by his acts in history – in the story of redemption = **Storyline of the Bible.**

That is what you see in the O.T. – whenever they worshipped – the focus was not on their experiences but on what God accomplished in space and time for his people and for his glory [see the Psalms].

That is what you see in the Bible – God revealing himself in action to save mankind and to restore all things affected by the 'Fall'.

Let me show you – notice how God refers to his past promise to Abraham in chapter 2 and chapter 3.

EX 2:23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

EX 3:7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

EX 3:15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD,ⁿ the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

What was this all about?

Let me remind you that when God called Abram [as he was known then] to leave his country God made certain promises.

This is what we read in Genesis 12:1-3

GE 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

*GE 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.*

*GE 12:3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."*

God was promising Abraham a seed and a land. – Covenant.

That promise was made over 400 years earlier.

But that promise goes back even further – just after Adam sinned God promised to send a deliverer – the seed of woman – to crush the head of the serpent – a promise of a coming redeemer, deliverer.

*GE 3:15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,*

*and between your offspringⁿ and hers;
he will crushⁿ your head,
and you will strike his heel."*

God had already worked out a plan to redeem humanity.

God was going to restore all things through a coming deliverer – back to Eden but even better.

When we come to Exodus, we have reached a crucial stage in the unfolding and fulfilment of that promise.

Nothing could stop God's purpose.

We see how in every circumstance God displays his ability to transform evil into good in order to keep his promise.

In the book of Exodus, we see how God delivers the Hebrews, he protects them, provides for them and eventually in spite of their sin, he brings them to the land he promised.

Eventually they would be a mighty and glorious kingdom under the rule of David and Solomon.

But that was only **a partial fulfilment** of God's promise – there was to be an ultimate seed, the perfect King who would reign from an eternal throne – an eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God.

All the time God had this ultimate fulfilment in mind – everything else was but a picture of the reality to come through the coming of the ultimate redeemer.

That is the story of the O.T. – which shows us how God was working out his purposes for the redemption of all things.

If you want to see what God is like – look at his acts in the history recorded in the Bible.

Implications.

All this goes to show me that there is objectivity about biblical faith that cannot be expressed in the language of inner experience.

You may ask whether it is not possible for God to choose to reveal himself and his true nature in our spiritual experiences.

To be sure, there is an immediate awareness of God's presence in worship, in prayer, in communion and confession **but the main emphasis of the Bible** is certainly on his revelation of himself in historical acts and in definite words not in subjective experiences.

God revealed himself to Moses not in his inner experience – it was a revelation in space and time, a revelation that could be communicated in human language, not in the confused and vague language of subjective experience – of feelings and emotions.

Much of what is considered spiritual, and spirituality is nothing but subjective experience.

The Bible makes it clear that God has revealed himself objectively.

Those acts of creation and redemption have been recorded for us in the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments.

It is not the **God within** that we proclaim and worship.

If God had not revealed himself to us from outside our own experience all we would have left would be our own culturally determined personally limited religious insights and how would we know whether our experience was real other than weakly claiming that it was '*real for me*' – whatever that means.

We would be left groping in the darkness of our own subjective, conflicting and confusing experiences.

If we want to know this infinite God – Yahweh, we can see what he is like in his acts for the redemption of all things and this we find in the Scriptures.

This brings us to consider the third we learn about God in this passage is

3. He is a personal God who invites us into fellowship with himself.

In the first place: God was defining himself in his own terms. He is the God who reveals himself in his actions.

God does not need us.

He is not lonely.

He is not unfulfilled.

He does not need to be loved.

He does not need our worship and praise.

But, in grace and great love he has invited us to share in his joy, in his glory.

That name YHWH was **God's personal name** and in revealing his name to Moses and to us he invites us to fellowship, that fellowship which Adam enjoyed before he fell into sin.

Although today, it has become common-place to use someone's first name, it was not always so – it was a privilege to use one's first name.

But even in these days I would imagine that you would not ever think of calling the President of South Africa by his first name.

Well, here the God of the universe is giving us the right to use his first name – the name by which those in fellowship with him know him.

The purpose of the exodus from Egypt was so God could live amid his people.

The tabernacle was a partial fulfilment of that promise that God would be with the descendants of Abraham.

It was pointing back to Eden before the Fall when Adam walked with God in perfect fellowship.

Of course, the difference was now that his presence was guarded by walls – as a protection for the people – and that fellowship with God could only be maintained by means of sacrifices and priests – access was not yet open.

One day it would be open and there would be complete access.

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION.

If you have followed carefully, you will know that the people in the O.T. did not fully understand the full significance of these things.

In the words of Paul in I Corinthians 13, they saw but a poor reflection as in a mirror, they did not see face to face.

Peter writes that even the prophets who spoke of these things did not fully understand what they were writing about.

Do you see how all these truths about God are so clearly revealed to us in our Lord Jesus Christ?

It is in Christ that we at last understand, as far as it is possible for the human mind, enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand, the meaning of '*Yahweh – I am what I am*'.

For in him the Great I am – becomes flesh, the picture becomes reality – the focus sharpens.

As John writes,

JN 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,ⁿ who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only,ⁿⁿ who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

Listen to what he says to the shocked Jewish leaders,

JN 8:58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

In Christ God defines himself on his own terms – and we now understand and see what even Moses did not fully grasp.

Here him claiming,

I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world.

I am the water of life.

I am the door of the sheep.

I am the good shepherd.

I am the resurrection and the life.

I am the true vine.

That is why he is the only way to God.

We can only know God in and through Jesus Christ.

There is no other way.

For he has chosen to reveal himself ultimately and completely and fully in his Son.

HEB 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word

And what we see – it astounds and is astonishing – what it meant to redeem us, that cross, the shed blood – taking the curse for us, becoming sin for us.

The one who would deliver us from the ultimate bondage of sin – through his death and resurrection.

That is the ultimate revelation and that took place in space and time – it was not just some idea – some great teaching – it was brutal, it was terrible, it was shocking – even death on a cross!

Why?

So that we may be reconciled to God – so that we may have access to God, and have fellowship with him, that we may know God.

Yes, we still do not fully see for how the finite mind can bound by the space time dimension, fully understand that which is eternal – beyond all dimensions.

But we know – we have a steadfast hope that one day, we will see him.

As John writes in I John 3, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

REV 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

How can we trade this for the fleeting and light pleasures of this world?

Those who know him are rich beyond comparison.

Those who have this hope – who know Yahweh, can look at life, with all its ups and downs, all its hardships, and pain and suffering and disappointment and rejoice.

RO 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

NT CONNECTION EXTRA NOTES.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus identifies Himself with the phrase "**I am**" in a way that strongly echoes the divine name revealed to Moses in the Old Testament. This is particularly significant because "I AM" (Hebrew: *Ehyeh*) is how God identified Himself in **Exodus 3:14**, saying to Moses:

“I AM WHO I AM... Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

In the **Gospel of John**, Jesus uses the phrase "**I am**" (Greek: *ego eimi*) multiple times in a way that implies divinity, especially in **John 8:58**:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."
(*John 8:58, ESV*)

The response from His audience—trying to stone Him—suggests they understood this as a claim to divinity and considered it blasphemous (see John 8:59).

Other "I Am" Statements in John:

Jesus also uses "I am" in a series of metaphorical statements:

- “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35)
- “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)
- “I am the door” (John 10:9)
- “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11)
- “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)
- “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)
- “I am the true vine” (John 15:1)

These are seen as both theological and spiritual claims about His identity and mission.

Summary:

Yes, Jesus does identify Himself using the phrase "I am" in a way that strongly associates Himself with the divine identity of God revealed in the Old Testament, especially in **John 8:58**, which

many scholars and theologians regard as a direct and profound claim to divinity.

A STRANGE INCIDENT

Let me remind you that after Moses fled from Egypt he went to live among the Midianites.

(Exodus 2:16) Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

(Exodus 2:17) The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock.

*(Exodus 2:18) When they came home to their father **Reuel**, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?"*

(Exodus 2:19) They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock."

(Exodus 2:20) He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

(Exodus 2:21) And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah.

(Exodus 2:22) She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

Now remember that Moses stayed there for 40 years.

(Exodus 4:18) Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

(Exodus 4:19) And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."

*(Exodus 4:20) **So Moses took his wife and his sons** and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.*

(Exodus 4:21) And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go."

(Exodus 4:22) Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, (Exodus 4:23) and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'

(Exodus 4:24) At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.

(Exodus 4:25) Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!"

(Exodus 4:26) So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

Before we look at this strange incident, let me draw your attention to something that has perplexed Christians, specifically that in chapter 2 we read of someone called Reuel, but in chapter 4, he is named Jethro, and later as well has the author got it wrong?

No, Reuel was his personal name and Jethro was a title of honour.

What is going on here?

It is obvious that this concerns the **circumcision** of one of Moses' sons – **which one?** We will see.

The main point: God was obviously angry with Moses – **why?** Because he had not circumcised his son.

Now Moses knew what God had said to Abraham,

(Genesis 17:7) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

(Genesis 17:8) And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

(Genesis 17:9) And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

(Genesis 17:10) This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

(Genesis 17:11) You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

(Genesis 17:12) He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, (Genesis 17:13) both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant.

(Genesis 17:14) Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

In spite of knowing this, it is obvious that Moses had neglected to circumcise his son. **Why?**

If he was going to be God's spokesman and the giver of the law, he must subject himself to the law. He had to learn that lesson.

Which son was uncircumcised?

We are not told, but we can perhaps put forward an educated guess, which may explain what is happening here.

Perhaps Zipporah's reaction will give the clue.

(Exodus 4:25) Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!"

Possible explanation – it seems to me that Moses had circumcised the first born, **Gershom** but that Zipporah, having seen the first circumcision was offended and objected to their second son being circumcised, and Moses, in order to please her, neglected to circumcise Eliezer [remember that Zipporah was Midianite].

Who were the Midianites?

(Genesis 25:1) Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.

(Genesis 25:2) She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Later they joined with Israel's enemies.

Coming back to Zipporah – she realized that it was because of her that Moses's life was threatened and so she did the job herself, repugnant as it was to her and notice that she throws down the foreskin of her son at Moses' feet – she is not repentant at all.

Now what is significant is that Moses, after this sends her back with his sons to her father, which we can see from Exodus 18.

Exodus 18:1) Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

*(Exodus 18:2) Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, **had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home,** (Exodus 18:3) along with her two sons. The name of the one was **Gershom** (for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land"), (Exodus 18:4) and the name of the other, **Eliezer** (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh").*

(Exodus 18:5) Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God.

(Exodus 18:6) And when he sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," (Exodus 18:7) Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent.

(Exodus 18:8) Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the LORD had delivered them.

(Exodus 18:9) And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

(Exodus 18:10) Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

(Exodus 18:11) Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people."

(Exodus 18:12) And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

Exodus plagues

Throughout Exodus we are shown that God is the unseen controller of all history and all circumstances.

He stands above the forces of nature.

This is shown so clearly in YAHWEH'S confrontation with the gods of Egypt.

Dramatically, convincingly God shows that the pagan gods are nothing – they are powerless – they only have the power that men attribute to them.

That is the meaning and significance of the **plagues**, which must not be viewed as a few random miracles.

These plagues struck at the very heart of Egypt's faith.

The Egyptians believed that each of the many gods controlled vital aspects of Egyptian existence from life to death.

Now, in a series of **10 judgments**, the gods of the pagans were challenged by the Lord and defeated.

The Pharaoh asked, '*Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?*'

Through the subsequent judgments, God announced, '*The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord*' [Ex 7:5].

Through the plagues God demonstrated the powerlessness of the gods of the Egyptians - '*I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt*' [Ex 12:12]

So each plague targeted a specific Egyptian god.

The first plague, the turning to blood of the floodwaters of the Nile, set the pattern for the others.

7: 17 This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. 18 The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.' "

EX 7:19 The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt--over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs'--and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars."

EX 7:20 Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. 21 The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

*To the Egyptians, the Nile itself was sacred and was controlled, they believed by the god **HAPI** – the god of the Nile.*

In its annual flood the river enriched Egypt's farmlands.

The water from the Nile irrigated those narrow strips of fertile land on each bank which held and fed the population.

It was the source and foundation of Egypt's life.

The Nile re-created life each spring, God at Moses' word turned the Nile rotten, polluted and stinking as spilled blood – seven days the water throughout all the land of Egypt remained in this terrible state, unsuitable for drinking.

The source of Egypt's life died and brought death.

Hapi was powerless before the God of Israel.

There is a bit of an irony here for we are read *EX 7:22 But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts,*

Presumably, they also did some miracles with the water, but what is significant they could not reverse what Moses had done.

And so it went – each plague was a direct challenge to Egypt's faith exposing the powerlessness of their gods.

The frog god of fertility, water and renewal was **HEKA or HEKET** [had the head of a frog] was represented in rotting piles of dead frogs. [7:25-8:15]

The god of the earth, **GEB** was over the dust of the earth but here the earth was infested with lice, the very dust that was referred to in the creation process of man is now used to plague men as a reminder that Yahweh alone is the God of creation. [8:16-19]

What is significant, the magicians for the first time realized that this was something beyond them, *(Exodus 8:19) Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.*

There followed an infestation of flies and focused on the Egyptian god **KHEPRI** – the god of creation, movement of the sun and rebirth – this god had the head of a fly.[Ex 8:20-32].

With this fourth plague, we see that God for the first time distinguished between the Egyptians and his people for it was only the Egyptians who were affected by the judgment – the children of Israel remained unscathed.

(Exodus 8:22) But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. (Exodus 8:23) Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen."'' (Exodus 8:24) And the LORD did so. There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies.

The next plague which resulted in the death cattle and livestock was directed against the god **HATHOR**, the goddess of love and protection [Ex 9:1-7].

She was depicted with the head of a cow.

This plague affected the Egyptians by creating a huge economic disaster, in areas of food, transportation, military supplies, farming and economic goods that were produced by these livestock.

But God made a distinction again, *(Exodus 9:4) But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die."''*

Unannounced the **6th plague** attacks the Egyptian people themselves.

Moses took ashes and threw them into the air and as the dust from the ashes blew all over Egypt, it settled on man and animals alike in the form of boils and sores.

This plague was directed again at **ISIS**, the goddess of medicine and peace [Ex 9:8-12].

Again, God protected his own people from this plague.

It is interesting that this plague made the Egyptians ceremonially unclean so we read, *(Exodus 9:11) And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.*

It was only Moses and Aaron who could stand in front of Pharaoh.

Again, Moses warns Pharaoh of the next plague, directed against **NUT** the goddess of the sky [Ex 9:13-35]

Because Pharaoh disregards the warning hail of unspeakable size and the ability to destroy rained from the sky and turned to fire as it hit the *ground (Exodus 9:26) Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.*

What is interesting is that a division between the Egyptians; namely those 'converted to the Lord', as shown by their obedience and willingness to escape to the protection of their houses *(Exodus 9:19) Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every*

man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them." (Exodus 9:20) Then whoever feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, (Exodus 9:21) but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the LORD left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

What is also interesting is the crops that were now destroyed consisted of flax and barley, which were ripening in the fields – crops used specifically for clothing and libations – however the wheat survived giving the Egyptians still another chance to repent and forsake their own Egyptian gods.

Still Pharaoh would not listen and thought he could rely on his own Egyptian gods and goddesses.

The **8th plague** was directed against **SETH or SERAPIS** the god of storms and fire [Ex 10:1-20].

The second wave of destruction to follow the hail were locusts that destroyed whatever crops left – everything was now consumed.

Yet Pharaoh would not listen.

The **9th plague** – [Ex 10:21-29] directed at **RA**, the sun god, lost all power to overcome the blanket of darkness God threw over the land for 3 days.

After the plague of darkness was lifted, Pharaoh resumed his position of bargaining with the Lord and offered Moses another deal.

Since virtually all the Egyptian animals had been destroyed Pharaoh now consented to let the people go but they must leave their animals behind.

This Israel could not do as the animals were to be used as the actual sacrifice to the Lord.

Enraged by the refusal, Pharaoh pronounced the last deadly plague as he warned Moses, *(Exodus 10:28) Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." (Exodus 10:29) Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again."*

(Exodus 11:4) So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, (Exodus 11:5) and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. (Exodus 11:6) There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.

(Exodus 11:7) But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

However, at this point the children of Israel had to demonstrate their faith in God by obeying God's instructions given through Moses.

Because in a real sense, both Egyptians and Jews, as part of humanity was under the sentence of death.

Why? Paul put it like this,

(Rom 5:12) Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men inasmuch as all sinned:

(Rom 5:13) for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

(Rom 5:14) But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is the type of Him who was to come;

(1Co 15:21) For since death is through man, the resurrection of the dead also is through a Man.

(1Co 15:22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive.

This was the lesson that Israel had to understand, there would be only one way of being delivered from the sentence of death [as that time, physical death, but ultimately spiritual death, that was by trusting God who commanded the offering of a lamb without blemish and spreading its blood on the door lintel.

You see that they were given strict instructions to follow so that the judgment would pass over them – these instructions are known as '***The Feast of Passover***', which is recorded in **chapter 12** and which we will look at in more detail.

This final and more severe plague – was directed against the ultimate power of Egypt – ***PHARAOH*** – death of the first born [11:1-12:36].

Pharaoh was worshipped by the Egyptians because he was viewed as the greatest Egyptian God of all – they believed that he was actually **the son of Ra** himself, manifested in the flesh.

In each encounter, the gods of Egypt were found wanting.

Thus, the plagues was a demonstration by God of his name – his essence – his power – his authority showing that the He was the only true sovereign God.

That was the lesson Egypt had to learn, but also the Egyptians – that God is sovereign – he controls and rules over all things.

Hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Nothing so clearly shows God's absolute sovereignty than the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Here was the mightiest ruler of the earth at that time, but he was powerless before God.

This is what God said to Moses,

EX 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."

This is repeated no less than six times.

Pharaoh's persistent refusal to let Israel go is explained again in chapter 10, *EX 10:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them ² that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD."*

11:10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

Now the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was particularly important because connected to the Egyptian idea of Pharaoh's deity was the belief that Pharaoh's *heart* was the all-controlling factor both in history and society.

God controlled the very center of Egypt's power.

No wonder Paul, commenting on this in Romans states,

¹⁷ For the 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."

If God had not repeatedly hardened Pharaoh, there would have been no drawn-out series of plagues and there would have been no proclamation of God's omnipotence.

It was for God's glory – to show that God was the only God and that the Egyptian gods were nothing.

Exodus shows quite clearly then that God was the ultimate cause of all of the hardening actions throughout *Exod 4–14* -- *it is never stated that Yahweh hardens Pharaoh in judgment because he hardened his own heart.*

Does this make God the author of sin?

No. Pharaoh is clearly held accountable for his disobedience – he is no mere puppet.

All that can be said is that Yahweh deemed it necessary to include Pharaoh's disobedient refusal in the plan, which was to glorify himself.

God proved his absolute sovereignty by delivering Israel, his people, despite Pharaoh's oppression and his stubborn refusal to let them go.

Nothing could hinder God.

There is no dualistic understanding of history – good against evil

God clearly uses evil for his purpose, for his glory.

For how long did the 10 plagues last?

The Bible does not tell us.

There have been various guesses ranging from about month to about a year [the Jewish Mishnah says 1 year].

One theory is about 4-5 months based on the following facts.

We know that the first plague lasted for 7 days [Ex 7:25], the 9th for 3 days [Ex 10:21-23] and the 10th for one night. While we do not know the length of the other 7 plagues they probably would not have been for more than 4 days on the average = 40 days.

What does this mean to us today?

Firstly, God is still in absolute control of the nations of the world.

He is still sovereign over history.

He is still in control of the rulers of the world.

What we see in the case of Pharaoh, can be stated as a general principle as we see in *Proverbs* ^{PR 21:1} *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.*

How easily we lose sight of this and we are filled with fear as we look at events in the world today, the political unrest, the terrorism, the rising godlessness, the anti-Christian sentiment in the media – pressure from all sides.

At this stage in history, it seems that we are being swamped – Christians are a minority – a scorned minority – and it is so easy to become fearful, to become discouraged.

No doubt the Israelites felt like this – how could they stand up against the power and might of Egypt?

They could not - but God did – God was in control and he still is in control

Look at Psalm 2.

*PS 2:1 Why do the nations conspireⁿ
and the peoples plot in vain?*

*PS 2:2 The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the LORD*

and against his Anointed One.ⁿ

*PS 2:4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.*

*PS 2:5 Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,*

*PS 2:6 "I have installed my Kingⁿ
on Zion, my holy hill."*

*PS 2:9 You will rule them with an iron scepterⁿ;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."*

*PS 2:10 Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.*

*PS 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.*

We belong to a kingdom that is ruled by our Lord Jesus, a kingdom that is eternal – that is in the process of crushing every earthly kingdom.

This is a truth that we must also apply to our personal circumstances –when we face the pressures of life, the hardships and suffering.

No matter what happens, God is on our side.

We are God's covenant people – those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – we are Abraham's seed, heirs of the covenant promise.

Sometimes, like the Israelites, we think God has forgotten us – but God had not forgotten them – he saw their plight and he intervened.

The people of Israel had not yet seen the full extent of God's care and concern – our Lord Jesus Christ had not yet come – but we can see that nothing could stop God's fulfillment of his promise, not Herod, who tried to have the baby Jesus killed – not the Jewish leaders who had him condemned, not the Roman authorities, who had him crucified – indeed, Peter puts the whole thing in perspective when he declared,

AC 2:23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,ⁿ put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead ...

AC 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

SUMMARY OF PLAGUES

1. Water into blood Ex. 7:14–24

This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hands I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink and the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water. — Exodus 7:17–18

2. Frogs Ex. 7:25–8:15

The Second Plague: *And Aaron stretched out his hand over the Waters of Egypt and the Frogs came up and covered the Sand of Egypt* etching

This is what the great LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will go up on you and your people and all your officials. — Exodus 8:1–4

3. Lice Ex. 8:16–19

The Third Plague: Moses, carries the rod, while Aaron, wearing the miter of a priest, stands behind him.

"And the LORD said [...] Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt." [...] When Aaron stretched out his hand with the rod and struck the dust of the ground, lice came upon men and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became lice. — Exodus 8:16–17

The Hebrew noun כְּנִים (*kinim*) could be translated as [lice](#), [gnats](#), or [fleas](#).

4. Mixture of wild animals or flies (עָרוֹב): Ex. 8:20–32.

The Fourth Plague: *The Plague of Flies*

5. Diseased livestock (דָּבָר): Ex. 9:1–7.

The Fifth Plague: Livestock Disease (Ex. 9:2–3),

This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on

your *livestock* in the field—on your *horses* and *donkeys* and *camels* and on your *cattle* and *sheep* and *goats*. — Exodus 9:1–3

6. Boils (שחין): Ex. 9:8–12.

The Sixth Plague:

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land." — Exodus 9:8–9

7. Thunderstorm of hail (בָּרָד): Ex. 9:13–35.

The Seventh Plague:

This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go. Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die. [...] The LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. — Exodus 9:13–24

8. Locusts (אַרְבֶּה): Ex. 10:1–20.

The Eighth Plague:

This is what the LORD, the God of the Jews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow. They will cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen. They will devour what little you have left after the hail, including every tree that is growing in your fields. They will fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians—something neither your fathers nor your forefathers have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now.

— Exodus 10:3–6

9. Darkness for three days (חֹשֶׁךְ): Ex. 10:21–29.

The Ninth Plague.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt—darkness that can be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. — Exodus 10:21–23

10. Death of firstborn (מָכַת בְּכוֹרוֹת): Ex. 11:1–12:36

This is what the LORD says: "About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again." — Exodus 11:4–6