

THE WORK OF THE LORD

Exodus 6:1-8

Intro: One of the most amazing stories in the OT is the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Israel was a nation within a nation. In fact, by the confession of the Pharaoh who ruled in Egypt at the beginning of the book of Exodus, the Israelites were more numerous, and they were stronger. They posed a threat to the nation Egypt in case of war. And yet the Israelites had become, through their servitude, essential to the economy of Egypt. The Egyptians feared them, and yet they did not feel that they could do without them. And so Pharaoh, knowing that he had to do something, decided to start killing the babies who were born to the people of Israel.

At this time Moses was born. His father's name was Amram. His mother's name was Jochebed. He had an older sister named Miriam, and an older brother named Aaron.

In order to save Moses, his mother made what we would call a small basket, made it waterproof, and put the baby in the basket, and then place the basket among some weeds which grew in the river. Pharaoh's daughter, coming down to the river to wash herself, found the basket with the baby, and decided to take him to raise as her own child even though she knew that he was a Hebrew child. And it was Pharaoh's daughter who named him, Moses. Moses received the same education that any child would receive who was a member of the royal family.

However, the hand of the Lord was on this young man, and as an adult he began to feel great compassion for his people. But he demonstrated that he needed to learn a great deal about the ways of the Lord when he killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew man. As a result Moses, who was 40 at the time, had to flee for his life, and he was in exile for the next 40 years of his life. When he was 80 God appeared to him in the desert in a burning bush, and he received his call to go back to Egypt to lead the people of Israel out.

Moses returned, was joined by Aaron, and this began the period during which God brought ten plagues upon Egypt, the last being the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians. After this Pharaoh released the Egyptians, and their journey to Canaan began.

This story, the first part of which is told in the book which bears the name Exodus, is rich with spiritual lessons for the people of God at every period of human history. Tonight I want to concentrate on an expression that is found no less than sixteen times in Exodus, and consider its meaning then,

and its meaning for us today. The expression, which is found the first time in Ex. 6:7, is this:

"...AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD...."

The expression does not always appear in exactly this same form, but, though the words may vary slightly, the meaning is always clear.

It is implied in this text with reference to Moses. The expression itself in verse 7 was made with reference to the children of Israel. In Ex. 7:7 it was stated about the Egyptians. And in Ex. 7:17 we have the first of six times that it was used of Pharaoh.

And it appeared for the first time in answer to Moses' question which he addressed to the Lord in Ex. 5:22, 23. At this point Moses had come back to Egypt, had made his first appeal to Pharaoh, had been rejected, and, must to his dismay, he had seen the condition of his people get worse, not better!

(Read Ex. 5:22, 23.)

His question was, "Why?" Why had God allowed the condition of the Israelites to worsen? Why had he been called back just to see this happen? And, if Moses had fully realized the long road ahead before the Israelites would be set free, he would have asked why it had to take so long.

At that point the Lord spoke to Abraham about His Name, Jehovah. This Name had been used in the book of Genesis, but the Name of God that had been emphasized in God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was "God Almighty." At this point, when Moses was acting as a Deliverer, the emphasis was to be upon this other Name of God: JEHOVAH. And its usage in the book of Exodus indicates four things:

- 1) God wanted Moses to learn the meaning of that Name.
- 2) God wanted the Israelites to learn the meaning of that Name.
- 3) God wanted Pharaoh to learn the meaning of that Name.
- 4) God wanted the Egyptians to learn the meaning of that Name.

In other words, this is the lesson that is most necessary for the leaders of the Lord's people to learn. This is the lesson that is most necessary for the Lord's people themselves to learn. This is the lesson that is most necessary for world rulers to learn. This is the lesson that is most necessary for the nations of the earth to learn.

THEREFORE, IN A NUTSHELL, THIS IS THE WORK OF THE LORD. When we ask ourselves, "Why does God do what He does the way He

does it?, the answer is: That His people and all people may know that He is the Lord! If you and I are learning this, we are learning what God wants us to know. The truth that is bound up in this Name, JEHOVAH, is truth which applies not only to God our Father, but to the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, and to the Holy Spirit our Comforter. As far as their nature is concerned, what One is, the Others are!

The greatest need of the world is to know Who God is. This is also the greatest need of the Lord's people. This explains for us why Paul would pray that the Colossian believers would be "increasing in the knowledge of God."

This was the Name that became so sacred in Israel that the Jews refused to pronounce it because they did not want to run the risk of taking the Lord's Name in vain. Consequently we do not know what its real pronunciation is. Several suggestions have been made. But I am going to stick with the Name as it appears in our Authorized Version, the Name JEHOVAH.

Notice its use in Ex. 6:2, 6, 8: "I am the Lord," or, I am Jehovah.

What does this Name mean?

I. IT MEANS THAT HE IS THE LIVING GOD.

As I have told you many times before, this Name is formed from the Hebrew verb, to be. We could translate it as the One Who is. He is the God Whose Name is "I am."

This might seem like a simple truth, almost too simple to even mention. But our experience shows that we often forget this. Look through our text with me at all of the times the Lord said, "I." (Read the first 8 verses emphasizing this point.)

He is a living Person. He talks. He sees. He hears. He acts. He makes promises. He remembers His promises. He chooses His own people. He locates them where He wants them to be. All of these are statements that He is a living God.

But there is another point here.

II. HE IS AN UNCHANGING GOD.

Why did He mention Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why did He mention His covenant with them? Why did He say that He remembered that covenant? Why did He mention the land

that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? It was to show Moses that the approximately 500 years between Abraham and Moses had not produced one iota of change in Himself.

And, as an added bonus, this then would mean that He was still "the Almighty God." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob needed to know that He was "the Almighty God" because the promises that God made to them were so out of the realm of human possibility that it would take an "Almighty God" to fulfill them.

Here Moses needed that same kind of encouragement. The promises to the patriarchs had not been fulfilled, but "the Almighty God" had made them, and "the Almighty God," Who had not changed, was perfectly able to keep them.

Let us remember that 3500 year later, where we are in time, God's Name is still JEHOVAH, the unchanged and unchangeable God.

But let me emphasize as a third point a fact that I have already pointed out.

III. HE IS A COVENANT-KEEPING GOD.

This was important for the Israelites to understand, but it is also important for us. The Lord may not fulfill His promises immediately, but He will fulfill them. This is important for us to know with regard to the Word of God. It is not wishful thinking when we trust in the faithfulness of God. There is nothing that is more certain than the promises of the Word of God.

And so when we say that God's Name is JEHOVAH, we are saying that God is a God Who can be trusted to do, not only what He has promised to do, but "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). What comfort and encouragement there is for us in this aspect of JEHOVAH's Name!

Finally (and I do not say that I have exhausted all that could be said about JEHOVAH),

IV. HE IS THE ONLY GOD WHO HAS THIS NAME.

No god in Egypt had the right to claim this Name. Nor does any other god in any other nation. This Name belongs only to the Lord our God!

Through Isaiah the Lord said,

I am the Lord: that is my name:
 and my glory will I not give to another,
 neither my praise to graven images (Isa. 42:8).
 The Lord also said,
 I, even I, am the Lord;
 and beside me there is no saviour (Isa. 43:11).
 And then we have the Lord's words in Isa. 45:5a,
 I am the Lord, and there is none else,
 there is no God beside me....

There have been other Abrahams, other Isaacs, other
 Jacobs, others who had the name of Moses. We could say
 that about any of our names. But there never has been,
and never will be, any other who has right to the Name
JEHOVAH! It is the Lord's, and His alone. There is no
 other JEHOVAH. There is no god like our God!

Concl: The object of everything that the Lord does in our
 lives is to teach us this truth. What a difference
 it would have meant to Pharaoh if he had learned this! The
 Egyptians probably came closer to it than he did, but even
 they did not as a nation realize what this meant, or could
 have meant, to them. Moses surely learned it, and many, but
 not all, of his people did.

Illus: Last night rather late I was on the phone with a man
 who was concerned about his son-in-law. His son-in-
 law cannot believe that the only way to heaven is
 through Jesus Christ. He feels that people in other
 religions will surely be accepted with God.

I asked this man what He believed about Jesus Christ.
 I said, "Does he believe that Jesus Christ is the
 eternal, the unique, Son of God?" He said, "No, he
 believes that Jesus Christ was a prophet." I said,
 "That is his problem. Until He realizes that Jesus
 Christ is God's Son, God's only Son, and until He
 realizes that there is just one God Who has placed us
 under judgment because of our sin, and until He
 realizes that no one has ever been able to provide a
 sacrifice for our sins that was pleasing to God, he
 will never see that there can be only one way to
 heaven--and that is through Christ.

How we should thank God that we know this! And it is our
 mission in this world to make sure that the people around us
 understand this great truth, too. This is THE WORK OF GOD in
 this world. And nothing, absolutely nothing, is more
 important!