

RUF Bible Study – The Book of Exodus  
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Exodus 5-6 – Who is the Lord?

Do you know where your people came from? Are you Irish or German or Asian or African? Are you part Indian? If you're even down to 1/64<sup>th</sup> Native American in Oklahoma, then you can get a whole lot of stuff. Free health care. Scholarships. Even a house (but they'll pick it out for you and it will be in Ada). In fact, if you're a member of an Indian tribe, you are actually a part of a different "nation." You'll have your tribal nation's license plate, driver's license, and you'll elect a president.

Sadly, most people don't really care, not even those of Native American blood themselves. Most of these regulations and laws are born out of guilt. The biggest way you see the Indian culture is in the building of massive, government protected casinos all along the interstate. I would guess that most Native Americans, including some of you, wouldn't be able to name 10 famous people from your tribes. The languages are all but dead.

Does that matter? We're saying that this story is *our* story if you are a Christian. That you are told and believe many stories in our culture, but this is the one that should capture your heart, for it speaks about *you*. That it can work its way into your life and heart and even change you as you get to know its lines, its characters, its stories. That's why we're looking at it together. Let's keep going.

***Pharaoh - Moses and Aaron - God***

We go from Moses and Aaron before the elders and God's people in worship immediately into their mission before Pharaoh. It's a little mysterious how two shepherd peasants can get a hearing with the Pharaoh, but we can assume that God opened the doors, perhaps using Moses' prior connections to make this happen.

We do notice that they didn't take the elders and they didn't say everything exactly as they were told. It's unclear how wrong Moses and Aaron were in this points of disobedience, but we take them into account.

Moses tells Pharaoh what the deal is, and he uses the phrase, "Thus says the Lord." This is the standard introduction of an emissary communicating a message from an authority. Moses is passing along information from someone else. He tells Pharaoh in the famous line, "Let my people go." But notice that that isn't all he says. In fact, he never says only that. He always says, "Let my people go that they may worship." God's people are gaining the freedom to worship Yahweh, not to do whatever they want.

Pharaoh answers. "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and moreover, I will not let Israel go." This is one of those "You shouldn't have said that moments."

You have those, or you will. For instance, I heartily recommend that the words "Are you pregnant?" or "When is your baby due?" or "Did you just have a baby?" never, ever, ever come out of your mouth. It's one of those "do you want to get away?" commercial moments. She will tell you if she wants you to know.

"Who is the Lord?" is one of those kind of questions. Now it is true that Pharaoh wouldn't have known that the God of the Hebrew people's name was Yahweh. That is understandable. But his question really isn't one of knowledge. It's one of the will. He doesn't know and he doesn't want to know.

Remember that Pharaoh isn't an atheist. He's a polytheist. The Egyptians had a ton of gods, gods for everything. In fact, Pharaoh *was considered a god himself*. So he's up with multiple gods. But this "god" is suddenly making some serious demands on his life. According to evidence, slaves were now and then allowed to go out for a few days off and worship, so this wasn't a completely unknown and outrageous request. But it made Pharaoh a little mad.

Pharaoh is a modern guy. He's not upset about the claim that there is a god. He's upset at the exclusivity of this claim. How can you say that this is the only God? Who is the Lord that I should obey him and him alone? Ha! Look at you. Your God obviously isn't working, you scraggly bearded nobodies. Get out of here.

You hear this. This is the voice of the modern thinker. He says, "I'll grant you that there are gods, but I am completely offended that you say that your way is the only way. How can you think that? It's so ancient, so backwards, so stupid."

Okay. What do you say to this? It sounds so open-minded and forward thinking, so enlightened. We cringe. But you have to realize that behind every assault is an equally audacious truth claim. This person is saying that he knows the only way. The only way is that there are many ways. But how does he know that? What does he base that knowledge on? What if he's

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For this series, I used commentaries on Exodus from Cole, Ryken, Childs, Pink, Cassuto, Motyer and Currid, as well *A House for My Name* by Leithart, *From Paradise to the Promised Land* by Alexander, and *The Gospel According to Moses* by A Dickson. I listened to sermons from Tim Keller and Les Newsom. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

wrong? Why is he so judgmental against people who claim only one of those ways? His truth claim is equally as exclusive, but it's hidden. This is the way it always works. If people call you judgmental, they are being judgmental but add to it a certain non-awareness of that fact.

Pharaoh doesn't want to know Yahweh. He has his gods and they seem to be working just fine for him. The God of Moses and Aaron seems incredibly pathetic. Sure he would think that. But we know something – just wait, we think. Just wait.

Pharaoh is ticked off by this demand. He goes and increases the workload of the Israelites. The Egyptian building industry is very brick-based, and slaves worked to provide the bricks. We have pictograms, charts and graphs indicating how this was done. But they needed straw. Taking away the straw was cruel, and also counter productive. Now the slaves had to find their own straw.

Pharaoh believes idle hands make active minds. This is a tyrant in action. “‘That same day’ he sends orders down through the chain of command that the work quota be increased. The logic of totalitarianism is surprisingly consistent. Resistance is stamped out by utterly exploiting the energy of the slaves.”<sup>2</sup> The chain of command can be seen here as the Israelite foremen complain to Pharaoh and then go to find Moses and Aaron in anger. The confront him saying, “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.” The overseers turn on their leaders and representatives.

The important point to see here is something that we can relate to, even if we've never been in blatant slavery. It is often the case that slavery gets worse right before redemption.<sup>3</sup> We know what is going to happen to God's people. But right before that, as a part of the story, the night gets even blacker. And you have to put yourself in the story to truly relate to this. The slaves don't fully know what's coming. They hope. They heard what it's going to be. They believe. But they don't know.

This can be terribly discouraging. You start to try to obey God's word, to believe his promises, to stand up against evil, to ask to worship – and things get worse. We think they should get better. Following God's word leads to the good life. We forget that evil demands everything. When slavery gets threatened, the bad master makes things worse. He tightens the knot. He quickens the pace.

If you are to be redeemed from slavery to worship by a redeemer, you need to know this story. Because you need to hear that it isn't an immediate Star Trek beaming to the Promised Land. The process of redemption involves a lot of hard things that might not make sense.

Have you encountered any of those? Do you expect following God to be easy? Have you experienced a place where things are getting worse as you're trying to get out from under the slavery?

We're about to see God answer Pharaoh's question, Who is the Lord? He's about to show Pharaoh in big and mighty ways. But before that, there is chapter 6.

### ***Moses and Aaron - God***

You can imagine Moses is a little frustrated here. He did what he was supposed to, at least mostly. And, well, it didn't work. Things actually got worse. And everyone is really mad, blaming him for not just leaving well enough alone. Now they stink in the noses of the people. Good job redeeming us Moses. Right. Now get outta here.

Moses does something good here. He talks to God. He has a complaint about the way things going, and it's fair enough. He prays to God about it. “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”

That's plain enough. Honest. Straightforward. God, what are you doing? Are you up there? I'm in trouble here and following you is only making things worse.

Do you ever pray like that to God? God is certainly interested in your day to day activities, your tests, your homework, your stress, your boyfriend, your roommates, your cash flow because he is the God of everything. But if he's the God everything, do you ever stop for a moment, or a morning away, and say “God, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?? I'm having a hard time trusting you here! Help me out or give me a break or something because right now I'm thinking you are doing a lousy job and I could do better!!”

I think that's an okay prayer. It's real. It's honest. It's true to your heart.

But be prepared to hear God's answer. He answered Moses, and he answered with promises. First, he establishes the fact that he has heard and that he is Yahweh. Not just anybody here. The God. I Am Who Am. That's who you're talking to. Yahweh has answered before (which is why you need to read the Bible and know these stories), and then he gives several “I will” promises. Things he will do. What are these?

*The Promise to Deliver* – God says I will redeem you. These are promises of liberation and redemption.

“I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them.”

“I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.”

*The Promise to Adopt* – God says I will take you for my people. He is acting as a redeemer because of his right as a near relative (a kinsman redeemer). This wasn't just a stroke of justice, but an act of love.

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<sup>2</sup> Childs, 106

<sup>3</sup> From Les Newsom

“I will take you as my own people and I will be your God.”

*The Promise to Give the Land* – God says I will give land to you as an inheritance. This is a tangible evidence of God’s provision, as land was the rock solid resource of the day. If you doubt, you just need to look at your feet, pick up some dirt and remember that this didn’t always belong to you.

“I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession.”

These are the promises of God given in a time of wondering and need. God says that he will do it. It is backed by his word. It’s his guarantee and his name stands behind it. Moses is reassured in his calling, even though he is doubting his effectiveness here.

Notice too that God’s people still aren’t sure. When Moses spoke, no one listened. Their unbelief was contagious. Their broken spirits and harsh slavery had beaten them down. They didn’t believe God’s promises.

In a sermon on this passage, Pastor Rob Rayburn writes: The Lord has his reasons why we must bear patiently the cross and pain, but it is fundamental to our faith that we must await developments. Paul puts the point as clearly as it can be put: Christianity depends utterly upon the fulfillment of promises that have been made but not yet kept. Christians live in the future tense. If Christ does not return we will be revealed to have based our lives on a falsehood. Christians have never hesitated to admit this. But they have then quickly gone on to say that many promises of God for the fulfillment of which believers waited a long time, have already been fulfilled and these are the proof that the promises yet to be fulfilled will be in due time. The Bible often makes the point that the Lord makes here: what God has done proves the reliability of his Word and the certainty of the fulfillment of his promises that are yet unfulfilled.

Knowing God’s story means that you can be honest in the in between times. God can handle it. Knowing God’s story means that you have seen how he has been faithful to his promises. Again and again, he has come through. Knowing God’s story means that you can look forward to the fulfillment of his promises in the future. You look forward with hope and a reason for that hope.

Do you believe? Do you pray? Do you hope?

#### ***Other People We Generally Skip Over (Genealogies are more exciting than you think – no really)***

We’ve seen the initial throw down between Moses and Pharaoh, which is really a contest of divinity between Yahweh and Pharaoh. We’ve seen the conversation between Moses and Yahweh. Moses has a renewed calling, reinvigorating him for his hard work as he goes out from God’s presence. What’s coming is the awesomeness of the plagues. But wait – first, we have genealogies. Ugh. This is the part you would skip, right?

But let’s take a second and look at it. Let’s remember that this is in here for a reason, and that we might have something to learn from it.

A genealogy is a stopping place for the author to remind you that these were real people we’re talking about here. This isn’t Star Wars, as elaborate and extensive as the background books about that series are. This is real.

A few of the names we find in here, and I would commend you add these to your list of considered baby names.<sup>4</sup>

Pallu means Extraordinary.

Korah means Baldy.

Nepheg means Clumsy.

Shaul means Prayer’s Answer.

Eleazar means God Has Aided.

Elzaphan means God Has Treasured.

Elkanah means God Has Created.

Jochebed means God’s Glory.

These were real people, as real as Grandpa Joe, Grandma Irene, Grandpa Jim and Grandma Deanie are to me. Their lives counted. They are in the Bible.

Remember that this is all being written down after the fact. Moses wanted the people to know where they came from, and why it mattered. You would have looked at this list and said, Hey, I knew Abiasaph. We went to high school together. Whatever happened to him? And you couldn’t facebook him, so you had the lineage to remind you that God was at work through families.

Let’s focus on another one: Phinehas. Phinehas means Ethiopian or black man. His mother must have been African, and his story is told in Numbers 25. He was zealous for God’s righteousness in some rather startling ways that some of us might be shocked at. It was later said about him and his act: “Then Phinehas stood up and intervened and the plague was stayed. And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation and generation forever.” (Psalm 106:30-31).

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<sup>4</sup> These definitions are ones I found in Ryken’s commentary.

People at the time of the writing of Exodus and the whole Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) would have known Phinehas. They would have accounted him as a hero. And Moses makes sure to include him, so that the hearers and readers would know that what is happening in the story has future ramifications. You know Phinehas and what he's done – that's a downstream result of what is happening in the story right here, right now. God was at work and still is at work.

But I need to mention that there is sadness in this list too. Korah, Nadab, Abihu are all names that represent disobedience. Moses doesn't leave them out. Korah was a cousin of Moses and Aaron who led a rebellion against Moses (Numbers 16). He was ambitious and wanted more recognition. He was jealous of his cousins and challenged their authority. He found out that rebelling against Moses was rebelling against God. He found that out in a dramatic way.

Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's two eldest sons who were priests, serving in the tabernacle like their father. They decided to try some new things in worship one day, and that experiment did not go well for them. They veered from God's regulative principle and were dragged out of the tabernacle, having been struck down for the Lord. Worship is a big deal to God. The holy God demands that we worship him in a holy way. Not even their sacred office could save Nadab or Abihu. They were not over the law. "Despite their holy calling, they were not holy men, and thus came to an unholy end." They likewise could not count on their family connection to save them. Being the sons of Aaron was a great thing, but they still perished. You must repent, and not rely on your family's faith to save you.

The genealogy reminds us that these are real people. Clumsy. Baldy. Fatty. Dorky. God Answers Prayer. A hero is in there. Some good people who went too far are in there.

Stop for a minute and think about your future. I know you live in a big NOW. Things seem very present to you. We're told to live in the now. But that isn't all there is. There is a future. Your decisions now affect your future. Do you ever think about that? Do you think about what conversations you want to have and don't want to have with your future husband or wife? What about the person you're dating's future husband or wife? Do you think about your children some day? What do you want to pass onto them? What are you going to be like in ten years? Too busy? Distracted? Unfaithful?

God is at work now, and that is affecting your future. Your decisions really do matter. You can start over and make a new genealogy of faith.

God brings about new families, new stories, new children. And he works in families.

Stepping back, what do we see here?

We see the gates about to let go on Pharaoh. He has asked the exclusivity question and is about to find the answer. We've seen how things are getting worse for the Israelites, as slavery is not an easy thing to get out of. Slavery will not let them go without a fight.

We have seen God's answer to Moses' question is one of promises and I wills. Vows to the future. Will he deliver? Can he be trusted?

And we've seen that God is at work through normal people. You can leave a legacy here at OU. Someone can stand and hear you say four years from now, You don't know this person but because of Carilyn I am here today. Because of John I made it through my freshman year. Because Brittany moved to Norman, I heard the Bible in Romans. Because the girl down my hall invited me to RUF, I changed. That really can happen. We could put together a spiritual genealogy.

Because Larry Glabe befriended Brad Anderson, Brad became a Christian. Because Brad moved into the dorms his senior year, he met Doug Serven when he was a freshman and Doug became a Christian. Because Doug and his family moved to Norman, Oklahoma to reach students for Christ and equip them to serve, he met Matt and Russ who met Clint who met Nicole, who met Katherine who met...

Wow. Where are you in this story? Is it your story yet? Can you see yourself in it? Are you resisting knowing God? You are welcome to be here if you are. You are welcome to say you don't know him and don't want to follow him. But I will continue talking about him and his mighty acts, how he will not be mocked, how he releases his people from captivity that they might be free to worship. We should talk about where your truth claims come from some time.

Are you mad and confused like Moses? The Vigilantes of Love sing this: Hold me tight, I'm losing it. Hold me tight, I'm confusing it. Hold me tight, I'm abusing it. Phil Mallonee goes on with this verse about unseen slavery: "sold me a wealth of pleasure // it was a dime store full of pain // the stuff I thought was jewelry // it turns out to be chains"

Is your slavery getting worse as you try to escape? Do you wonder if God is really answering? Can you see the jewelry is really chains? Believe in God's promises. He has them. Do you know them? Do you see them?

You see, the hero of this story isn't Moses. He's great and all, but he's not doing much really. Aaron even less. Certainly not Pharaoh, as he represents all that is evil. Who is the story? Phinehas? No.

The hero is God himself. Yahweh is the one who is making all the promises here, and backing them with his name. He is the one adopting people.

I have a few friends who are adopting babies. Todd and Rebecca Wedel adopted Anna Ruth. The Twits adopted Amelia. The Hambys adopted Simeon. And the McDonalds are adopting a baby from Haiti. They are heroes to me.

God has adopted you. He is the hero. He is the God of salvation, the one who saves. Who makes slaves into children. He is to be worshiped.