

The Redeemer Responds

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God is good and just. He sees the suffering of the oppressed and promises redemption.

In the 1980s, a song titled “Walk Like an Egyptian” by the Bangles shot up the charts and led to people of all ages doing the lighthearted “sand dance.” (The move was supposed to reflect ancient Egyptian art.) Even today, people unfamiliar with the song know the dance.

However, “Walk Like an Egyptian” doesn’t lead you to take Egypt very seriously. For many in the West, Egypt is known primarily for ancient pyramids or King Tut’s tomb. In the period of the exodus, however, people feared Egypt. Egypt had mighty Pharaohs, great building projects, and they were in touch with dark power. Everyone took Egypt seriously. Israel certainly wasn’t doing the Egyptian sand dance. They were enslaved to the Egyptians, and it’s the awfulness of their slavery that sets the dark backdrop for God’s glorious deliverance that takes place.

 Why were the Israelites in Egypt?

 How would their slavery have affected their view of God’s covenant promise?

In Exodus 1:8, we read that a new king over Egypt dealt harshly with the Israelites. As a result, Joseph’s family was brought under political slavery (1:8-10), economic slavery (1:11-14), social slavery (1:15-22), and spiritual slavery (3:18; 4:22-23; 5:8). They desperately needed to get out of Egypt.

“Exodus” means “a going out” or “departure.” This book of the Bible provides the historical account of God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt’s cruel slavery. In this session, we see how God responds to Israel’s terrible plight by listening to the prayers of His oppressed people, revealing His character to Moses, and promising to deliver and redeem them. Watching God reveal Himself and His justice should inspire us to worship our Redeemer and pursue His mission in the world.

Voices from the Church

“God is grieved by the sin, death, and power of hell that afflicts His world, and is sacrificially involved in the removal of all that destroys and alienates His world from Himself.”¹

—Joshua Ryan Butler

1. God responds by listening to the prayers of the oppressed (Ex. 2:23–3:10).

²³ During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

God *heard*. God *saw*. God *took notice*. God’s attentive nature is revealed throughout the Scriptures (ex. Ps. 34:15). God’s people can cry out to their God and trust that He hears them and cares about their situation. These cries from the Israelites were of particular interest to God because of His covenant with Abraham (2:24). God’s purpose of redemption and mission given to Abraham in the Book of Genesis continues in the exodus story. God cares about His people.



Sinful, evil deeds often remain hidden in the world and in our lives. How does it comfort you to know God sees every sinful deed done against you?



How does it challenge you to know that God sees every sinful deed you have done against Him and others?

¹ Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush



is not burned.” ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

God spoke to Moses and called him to take his sandals off as an act of reverence (3:5; see Josh. 5:13-15). God then identified Himself with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:6), giving Moses a bit of personal history of Himself. The Scripture says Moses “hid his face” in response (3:6). Why? Because Moses was in the presence of the Holy One. We should understand Moses’ fear. We should also maintain a sense of reverence before God. However, as believers, we don’t have to hide from God *in terror* because of the work of Christ. We are hidden *in Him* (Col. 3:3)! Therefore, we can seek God with confidence because of the work of Christ.



What is the difference between being “terrified” by God and being “awed” by God?

7 Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,"⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

In verses 7-10, this holy God responds to the cries of the oppressed by revealing His plan to Moses. God's *motive* appears in verses 7 and 9. God told Moses that He was aware of the people's desperate situation, echoing the words of 2:23-25 and showing us that God does indeed hear our cries.

Next, God responded by explaining His *purpose* to Moses. God was going to save them *from* something (slavery) *for* something (worship and witness).

That's exactly what has happened to us through Christ's work on our behalf. In Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul told the Ephesians that they had been saved (by grace through faith) *from wrath* and *for good works* (see also Col. 1:13-14).



How does it encourage you to know that God hears the cries of the oppressed?

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

43. Enslaved to Sin

Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

2. God responds by revealing His character (Ex. 3:11-15).

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, 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, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Moses wasn't eager to go on mission. In the following dialogue, Moses made several excuses for not obeying God's call. God responded to each of Moses' excuses and questions with statements about His own sovereignty and power.

This section is deeply encouraging. If you feel as though God is sending you to do something beyond yourself, the key is to take your eyes off of your failures and weaknesses. Get a vision of God. Moses too had to recognize that God is enough.

Moses' first argument was about himself—he was an average guy, and he didn't have great influence. Yet God responded to Moses by revealing what's most important—Himself. God said, “I will be with you” (3:12). Throughout the Bible, this is what God's leaders need to lead—God's presence. It's the nonnegotiable for serving God.



What are some areas in which you feel unqualified or unable to do what God has called you to do?



How does God's presence and His promise enable you to go on?

Moses' next big question was "What is Your name?" (3:13). It was obviously important to know who God is, especially if you are going to tell a group of people that God sent you! Merely saying, "I heard a voice in a bush," wouldn't be very persuasive.

So God told Moses His name (3:14-15). God revealed His name as "Yahweh" (commonly rendered as "LORD" in English) in verse 15. Great mystery exists here. No one really knows how to pronounce God's name, and the meaning is mysterious also, but the meaning seems to be related to the idea of this verb "to be." In other words, "God is." He is central. He has no beginning. He causes everything to be. He alone is God.

Does it move you when you hear, "Tell them *I AM* sent you"? God was saying that He is absolutely central. Paul later said, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36). Is God central in your life? Is He central in your marriage? Is He central in your ministry? God told Moses that the most important thing about his mission was God Himself!

Behold, the greatness of your God. God is self-existent and self-sufficient. God needs no air, no sleep, and no food. He doesn't need us, but we need Him! God wasn't like the Egyptian false gods. He was and is the one true God on whom all things depend. God is also majestic in His mysteriousness. We will never have God totally figured out. He doesn't involve us in His work because He needs us; He includes us because He loves us.



Voices from Church History

"[God] needs no one, but when faith is present He works through anyone."²

-A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)



When we feel inadequate to obey God's call, what are some ways we can move our eyes from the magnitude of the task to the majesty of God Himself?

3. God responds by promising redemption (Ex. 3:16-22).

¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷ and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’ ¹⁸ And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, ²² but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

In this striking promise, Moses was learning what it means to be a prophet: to declare God’s message and to trust in God to work in people’s hearts. Consider how God told Moses that the elders “will listen to your voice” (3:18). This wasn’t the last time God would promise Moses that people would respond to His message.

Notice also that Moses and the elders were going to say to Pharaoh: “Please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God” (3:18). We see here that Israel wasn’t just enslaved physically, but they were enslaved spiritually too. They needed to be freed in order to worship (see 7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3).

Even though the elders would listen to Moses’ message, God reminded Moses that Pharaoh would not listen, at least not initially. God told Moses that in response to Pharaoh’s refusal, He would intervene with His “mighty hand” performing wonders (3:19-20).

Moses still wasn’t convinced. In chapter 4, he argued with God and gave excuses, all of which God answered. God is looking for reporters, not orators. We do not have to make fine speeches; we just give the news. Moses had to learn, like us, that “it’s not about you!” It’s about the I AM.



What are the fears that most hinder you from speaking on God's behalf?



How can we overcome these excuses with faith in God's promised redemption?

Conclusion

The plan was in place! God responded by revealing His promise of redemption to the reluctant shepherd-mediator, Moses. And here we look forward through the Scriptures to Jesus, the great I AM who gave us an even greater revelation of God's goodness and righteousness. He is the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for His sheep in order to lead us out of a greater slavery into a greater freedom—from the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom of light.

As the people of God's kingdom, we are formed by God's deliverance. In this story, we see how God promised deliverance from (1) socio-political-physical-economic slavery and (2) from spiritual slavery. Christians should care about alleviating both types of human suffering: temporal suffering and especially eternal suffering. Let's do both in the power of our self-sufficient, prayer-hearing God.

Voices from the Church

*"Exodus-shaped redemption demands exodus-shaped mission. And that means that our commitment to mission must demonstrate the same broad totality of concern for human need that God demonstrated in what he did for Israel...Our mission must be derived from God's mission."*³

—Christopher Wright

CHRIST CONNECTION: God told Moses His name "I AM" as a revelation of His good and righteous character. Jesus is the great "I AM" who gave us an even greater revelation of God's goodness and righteousness.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to be conscious of the plight of the oppressed and, in response, to show and share the love of God.

1. How can we make sure our ears are open to injustice and oppression in our world so we can respond with good works in Jesus' name?

2. What are some ways we can increase our sense of reverence for God?

3. How should your redemption from sin through Jesus, the great "I AM," change the way you think about your circumstances?
