

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Wednesday Morning Women’s Bible Study
Week #5

Exodus 5:1 – 6:1

October 11, 2023

1. The battle between Moses and Pharaoh finally begins
2. The battle is larger, however, than between two men, or even two “warring” nations: it is a battle between Good and Evil, between God and Devil
3. Moses & Aaron confront Pharaoh with two things:
 - a. The reality of Yahweh – God of the Hebrews – as a “new” god to Pharaoh
 - b. The demand of this god on Pharaoh to “let my people go”
4. In Egyptian society, the Pharaoh was both “God” and “Ruler” – but now a different God claims power
5. The fundamental question here is about who has the ultimate power, Pharaoh or Yahweh?
6. There is also the question of whom Israel will serve: either Pharaoh (as his slaves) or Yahweh?
7. Pharaoh’s response is typical and expected – he does not recognize any power higher than his own
8. Pharaoh asks the same question that Moses asked: who is this God that has arrive to issue new commands?
9. Pharaoh and Moses both ask the question that all of scripture asks (and answers!): Who is God, and how shall we respond to this God’s presence in the world?
10. Pharaoh’s Response
 - a. He does not recognize Yahweh as god
 - b. He oppresses the Hebrew people even more than before
 - c. The people end up suffering terribly – and though the end result is positive, we must never overlook their suffering
 - d. Pharaoh responds as do all oppressive rulers & systems:
 - i. He expresses in more dramatic fashion his absolute power over the oppressed – they will now have to gather their own straw but still make as many bricks as before
 - ii. The oppresses are made to feel even more inferior (they are “lazy”)
 - iii. The oppressed are made to feel like they deserve their status – they tried to get out of the work that was “rightfully” theirs by claiming a need to worship
 - iv. The people are beaten down even more, making it harder for them to have the will or energy to fight back against the system
 - v. The truth of the situation is subtly twisted to serve the desire of the oppressor – Pharaoh blames Moses for the increased pressure
 - vi. “Blame” is shifted from Pharaoh, then to Moses, and even finally to God himself!
 - vii. Pharaoh manages to sow division among the Hebrew people – between Moses & the other elders of the tribes
11. The complex dynamics that ensue when God confronts Evil
 - a. Evil always responds with claims of self-righteousness – Pharaoh claims that the large numbers of Hebrew slaves in Egypt demands that they work harder than the “native” Egyptian population
 - b. Those seeking good actually precipitate evil – Moses starts a battle that will claim casualties
 - c. The presence of such complexity causes people to blame God for all of it: why does God allow evil?
12. Moses’ Response:
 - a. Moses struggles to maintain his faith in Yahweh
 - b. God reaffirms his call to Moses
 - c. Moses is challenged with the task of staying the course and trusting God

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. Where do you see injustice in the world today?
- B. How have you personally participated in or been affected by battles against injustice?
- C. Do you see anything of yourself (good and bad) in the persons of Moses, Pharaoh, the other Hebrew leaders?
- D. What have you learned from this ancient story about the complexity and subtle evil of situations where injustice exists in the world now?
- E. What tempts you to give up on God’s promises for your own life, and what keeps you faithful to him?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

Resources:

- a. Interpretation Commentary on Exodus, Terence E. Fretheim, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1991
- b. The Communicator's Commentary Series, Old Testament, Exodus, Maxie D. Dunnam, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1987
- c. The Old Testament Library: Exodus, Brevard S. Childs, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1974