

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: Part II - Exodus 7:8-13

Introduction:

Last week we opened chapter 7 of the second Old Testament book, Exodus, by considering the early verses (1-7) which richly present the '**sovereignty of God**' in full scope. These opening verses of chapter 7 contain a lot acts, resolves, development; yet for as much as they contain, there is little doubt who presides over it all. God is in control, Almighty God Alone! God is '**sovereign**'. It does not matter the event, God is in control, and consistently throughout, God's Word makes it clear that God is in control, and that God is '**sovereign**'.

By definition, '**sovereign**' means God's all powerful rule, and absolute control over all things in His creation.

We saw last week, and will see again this week, that God's sweeping '**sovereignty**' extends from heaven's heights to the human heart. It is a comprehensive sweeping '**sovereignty**' where every variable, every act, every king, even the smallest molecule, all of everything, is in God's '**sovereign**' hand, moving it as He wills. May this be a comfort to you.

In Review of Last Week's Study:

I. GOD IS '**SOVEREIGN**' OVER POSITIONS: EXODUS 7:1-2

Exodus 7:1-2

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.’”

Here is Pharaoh, the lofty king, most powerful ruler of the time. And then there is a lowly shepherd of forty years, like Moses, who has been 'placed' in the 'position' to do God's business, who will stand over Pharaoh, because he has been 'positioned' by God to stand in, to stand 'like' God before Pharaoh. Lowly shepherd, I will 'position' you, and you will stand 'in my place' before Pharaoh. Under God, it does not matter what the position is, lofty or lowly, for it is God who 'positions' them all.

Daniel 2:21

“He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding.”

This is '**sovereignty**'. The implications being, that earthy positions do not matter, regardless of the position, government office worker, politician, medical officer, teacher, PSW; it matters not, for God 'positions' them all. Regardless of the position, high or low, God places all positions; all 'positions' are in His hand.

II. GOD IS '**SOVEREIGN**' OVER PEOPLES: EXODUS 7:3-5

Exodus 7:3-5

“But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.”

God will harden Pharaoh's heart. (vs3) This is not new, not an isolated event. Scripture tells us of many times when God hardens the heart of someone. Why does He harden hearts? For His own purposes. It is His divine will at work. Here He hardens Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of 'deliverance'. He has express purpose in mind when He does this. God, in His '**sovereign**' power, does what is needed for the good of the people. And He does likewise for us. God also explains that He intends that all of Egypt will "know that I am the Lord" (vs 5) God is taking '**sovereign**' action, express purpose, to make 'God Almighty' known. This is the theme of the Old Testament, God, doing mighty acts, '**sovereign**' acts, for His purpose, that they will know Him, and for the good of the people.

We remember King Sihon's heart had been hardened by God, to serve God's purposes, for the good of God's people, and so that they would know that He was God Almighty.

Deuteronomy 2:30-31

“But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day. And the LORD said to me, ‘Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to take possession, that you may occupy his land.’”

Ezra 6:21-22

“It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel. And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.”

This is '**sovereign**' God; this is '**sovereignty**' over all people, over all nations, for His purpose, and for His glory. And modern day people are the same, there is no difference from the ancient peoples; they are still under the '**sovereignty**' of God, and God is still '**sovereign**'. God is still '**sovereign**' over our hearts today; the God of our fathers is still '**sovereign**' over every heart. There is peace in that God is '**sovereign**' over every heart today, over all people.

III. GOD IS '**SOVEREIGN**' OVER PLANS: EXODUS 7:6-7

Exodus 7:6-7

“Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.”

Verse 6 is a turning point for Moses. Moses and Aaron 'did' what God commanded. Moses is no longer protesting and making excuses. His own plans are now a distant plan and memory. Living life in Midian, as a shepherd of sheep, in Jethro's house, was a quiet existence, and was a noble life, while it existed, but it was not God's plan for Moses at this time. And so, a different Moses emerges. In spite of his protests and excuses, God still had His way, and Moses is now in obedience to God's plan. God's '**sovereign**' will was irresistible (as it always is), because God is '**sovereign**' over plans. Man plans his way, but it is God who establishes our steps.

Proverbs 16:9

“The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps.”

James 4:15

“Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”

We make plans but the final word in all our plans belongs to Almighty God. The final word is the domain of God. 'If the Lord wills it', then it shall come to pass.

IV GOD IS '**SOVEREIGN**' OVER POWER: Exodus 7:8-12

Exodus 7:8-12

“Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘When Pharaoh says to you, “Prove yourselves by working a miracle,” then you shall say to Aaron, “Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.”’ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.”

There is a bookend to be noted here, detail, that frames this section. Verse 9 states, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, prove yourself and do a miracle. And God 'foretells' what Pharaoh will say. **THIS IS OUR GOD!** God is not bound by 'what ifs'. No. God says 'when this happens' and 'this will happen' and you can be sure that it will happen, will come to pass, as He has said. And in verse 10, it does, indeed, all happen. Moses and Aaron proceed as God has commanded them to do, and the staff becomes a serpent. This is the authenticating sign that Moses had been seeking earlier on, to prove to Pharaoh that God was behind all that was happening.

Exodus 4:1-5

“Then Moses answered, ‘But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, “The LORD did not appear to you.”’ The LORD said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ He said, ‘A staff.’ And he said, ‘Throw it on the ground.’ So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the LORD said to Moses, ‘Put out your hand and catch it by the tail’—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ‘that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.’”

And so, Moses and Aaron had approached Pharaoh as God commanded.

Exodus 5:1

“Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.””’”

The sign of the staff had originally been for Moses, to reassure him, but now it was a sign for Pharaoh. Thus the 'bookends'. The 'miraculous authenticating sign of the staff', becoming a serpent, initially proof for Moses, and then proof for Pharaoh. The purpose in both cases, to authenticate God, and his messenger. God knows that Pharaoh will ask for a sign (as we see in the foretelling in vs 9). Then, in vs 10, we see it unfold just as God said it would.

'Show us a sign.' God has told us that this is where Pharaoh's heart was. 'Prove it!' This is the token badge of unbelief --- unbelief in neon lights, the badge of the unfaithful, the unbelieving, the hardened heart. The hardened heart always says, 'prove it'. This is both 'instruction', and a 'caution'.

First the 'instructive' piece. Richard Dawkins, the famous atheist, when asked why he does not believe, stated that it was because 'This God does not make Himself known. Why does he not give us a sign?' Like so many, I'll only believe if you give me proof. It is the 'expected' response, 'Give me a sign!' This is not just a modern phenomena. No. Unbelief always is 'exposed' and followed by the need of proof, of a sign.

Matthew 12:38

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, ‘Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.’”

They had just witnessed Jesus's miraculous 'healing' of the demon-possessed man who was both blind and dumb, and had heard Jesus teaching, yet they demanded more, and demanded signs. Two points to be made here: 1. They must be 'blind' to spiritual matters, and thus cannot see/understand the signs they see, and 2. Signs don't matter when it comes to 'true' belief. Signs are blinders, deceptive, insidious, to those who truly believe and follow Christ. Many have started out following, saw the miraculous feeding of thousands, saw the healings, experienced the wondrous signs He performed, heard His teachings in person, yet turned back, turned away, unwilling to commit, not liking the words they have heard, perplexed by the message; it is too much for them, they do not like the hard stuff of the message, they do not like the words. Once they had heard the teaching, they were out; 'I am out, that is too hard for me'. They find they have issues with the expectations.

John 6:66

“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.”

There are those people whose whole spiritual life is based on, built on, miraculous signs. God told me this. I saw that. I saw this. They love signs. But their spiritual life is but a 'house of cards'. Take away the 'signs' and you are left with a 'hardened heart'. God is no longer performing miracles, and His words are not enough, His message is not found to be desirable.

So let this be our caution. Let us not be a people of 'signs'. Let us not be a people gathering for the purpose of 'signs', for proof, for evidence. No. That is the pagan way, the 'sign' economy; that is

Pharaoh's way, the Pharisees' way. They need proof. They need validation. Unlike Pharaoh, unlike Egypt, we are a people of 'faith', not signs. Faith knows no signs.

We think of Thomas, the disciple, who was the biggest sceptic. He was saturated in unbelief. Have you believed, Thomas, because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe. This is where true faith lies.

John 20:26-29

“Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”

Faith is not something that is seen. It is the 'conviction of things not seen', as we are told in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Faith never asks for a sign. Let us heed this. We do not need a sign in 2020 that tells us that God is in control. **'Sovereign'** God has given us the faith to believe. He has 'regenerated' our hearts. He has made us from 'dead' to 'life'.

But Pharaoh did not believe. He did not know the Lord God. He had no faith in 'Almighty God'. Pharaoh turns to 'sight', and 'evidence'. I can do that, he says. Pharaoh calls to Egypt's magicians. The ancient courts had lots of this, experts in the 'dark' secrets, the secret arts, a religion unto itself. The magic part was interwoven with the local religion; this was common. Unbelieving religion loves the secret arts, the hidden words, the speculation. This is the false prophet, the fake imposter, the lifeblood of the charlatan, with 'showy' pretenses. They cannot stop talking about the 'signs'. This is the religion of experience, of sensations. I soaked, I felt. Now insert sensuality and feelings. Yet they claim this is from God.

I John 4:1

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Many false prophets had gone out in the first century, and today it has amped up and grown further. And today is even worse. Today there are claims that Jesus Christ did it so we can do it too. This is what Pharaoh is doing here in Exodus. That's power? I can do that too. Watch me, he says. But take note: What you hear and see the world doing are pale imitations, poor attempts at being a copycat. The point is 'we don't see counteracting'. They copy the action, but cannot counter the action. They cannot make the snake turn back to the staff. They cannot turn the blood back to water. They cannot reverse the endless frogs. We don't see it, because they cannot do it. They are well prepared with their arts, but they have no true power. They are permitted to do only what God allows them to do. Satan has to ask

for Job from God; it is only because God allows it, and gives Satan power that Satan is able to affect Job's life. The subordination of Satan and the demons in Scripture is clear in both the OT and the NT.

Job 1:9-12

“Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.’ And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.’ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”

We read how the demons ask Jesus to send them into the pigs. They cannot flee Jesus on their own.

Matthew 8:28-32

“And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’ Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, ‘If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.’ And he said to them, ‘Go.’ So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.”

It is only by the will of God that 'true power' is granted. We read how Jesus appointed twelve apostles and gave them 'power' to tend to His work among the people.

Mark 3:14-15

“And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.”

Without God intervening, man's thoughts and power are limited to temporal time, to earthly considerations, but God has power over life and death, over this world and the world to come, His power being beyond the scope of man. We see an example of this when Jesus is explaining how His life will unfold in the days ahead, but even Peter, His disciple, who has just acknowledged Him as the Christ, fails to truly understand the full meaning of His teaching.

Mark 8:31-33

“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’”

Later Jesus warns the disciples to be careful of those who will come trying to mislead and falsely represent Him.

Mark 13:3-6, 21-23

“And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?’ And Jesus began to say to them, ‘See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, “I am he!” and they will lead many astray. And then if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Christ!” or “Look, there he is!” do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.’”

And so, Pharaoh, who has no faith in Almighty God, who does not believe in the God that Moses speaks concerning, calls for his magicians to do their magic, and they too cast down their staffs which become serpents also. Yet there was a difference, which Pharaoh was to see.

Exodus 7:11-12

“Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.”

This was not a battle of 'sovereignty' between holy God and the pharaoh. No. God 'allowed' the magic act. The demonic magic act was 'allowed' by Almighty God for the 'purposes' of God. He allowed the 'pale copy cat', the false power, allowed whatever flashy power the magicians had to be carried out, so that its inferiority beside the **supreme power** of God Almighty might be seen. And so, Aaron's staff is thrown down before Pharaoh and his servants "and it became a serpent" (vs 10), yet when Pharaoh's magicians did likewise, their serpents were "swallowed up" (vs 12) by Aaron's staff, were swallowed up by the '**sovereign power**' of God, demonstrating that Almighty God's 'power' was supreme over that of Pharaoh's.

What are the 'takeaways' from this situation?

1. The 'created thing' tries to create things to demonstrate their own power and might. This is as old as Genesis when they strive to build the Tower of Babel, their tower to heaven, striving to be like God, striving to establish their own power and might.

Genesis 11:4

“Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’”

2. Today, we see the attempts of man to 'reset' the social norms, creating their own morality, their own ethics. They do not want, they cannot accept, the '**power**' of God. Pale imitation always seems to pacify those not on guard. They cannot accept the power of Almighty God, so they pretend. This is like little ones who are more content with the box than with the contents inside of the box. And this has become the reality in the church. So why and how do those claiming to follow Jesus Christ fall for this?

Paul warns Timothy that this is what is coming, and therefore 'guard' yourself. Be aware. Do not get involved with such stuff. People will grow restless with the Word of God, but you stay with the Word, preach it, instruct with it, reprove with it. Stand by the truth.

II Timothy 4:1-4

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

Paul also defends his Apostleship to the Corinthians, encouraging them, in their sincerity, to be aware of deception, and of easily being led astray, for there are magnificent orators, but their message is offering false ways, and therefore what they say must be weighed carefully, for even Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light. One must take care, and weigh the message carefully so that the message of Christ remains pure, and based on 'true knowledge'.

II Corinthians 11:12-15

“And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”

Many preach, but not all preach Christ. The message may look good, and sound good, yet be Satanic in nature. Be on guard, therefore. Their message may sound sincere, but it must stand true to the Word. Test it by the Word; weigh it all against the Book itself. This is how we will know.

I Thessalonians 5:21

"But test everything; hold fast what is good."

V GOD IS '**SOVEREIGN**' OVER PROCLAMATIONS: Exodus 7:13

Exodus 7:13

“Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.”

And so Pharaoh's heart remains hardened, just as God said it would be. Nothing has changed from what He proclaimed would happen. It has all come to pass, as He said it would unfold.

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 7:3

“But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.”

When God proclaims it, it comes to pass. God says to Moses, 'WHEN Pharaoh says...'; not 'if Pharaoh says, but 'WHEN' Pharaoh says. He proclaims it will be done in a particular way, and He fulfills it as He proclaims it will be. God says it, and it happens. His proclamations and fulfillments are astounding, and powerful, and mighty.

Exodus 7:9

“When Pharaoh says to you, “Prove yourselves by working a miracle,” then you shall say to Aaron, “Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.””

Pharaoh also makes bold proclamations, as we read in Chapter 5.

Exodus 5:2

“But Pharaoh said, ‘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.’”

But by Chapter 12, we know that he was dead wrong in his proclamation, for Israel departs from Egypt (Exodus 12:41-42). Pharaoh's power was not power at all. Though he was the most 'powerful' man in the world at the time, he was impotent set against the Holy God who was 'omnipotent'. There was no battle between the two, as we will continue to see.

GOD IS 'SOVEREIGN' OVER PROCLAMATIONS, the bold and the quiet ones, the controversial ones, and the proud and humble ones. Amusing, perhaps, but they prove wrong most times. Even Nostradamus proved wrong more than right. Imagine if some human was always right in his predictions, striking gold every time; would you trust him? Likely, yes. But 2020 has shown us there is no one that we can ultimately trust. There are a lot of pharaohs today, making lots of proclamations, but which only prove to be wrong.

But for the third time, Jesus proclaimed His 'astounding' death and resurrection on the third day. This is what will happen, He proclaimed to them. And we 'gather' today, because it all came to pass.

Mark 10:32-24

“And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.’”

Mark 8:31

“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

Mark 9:9, 12

“And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”

“And he said to them, ‘Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?’”

He would suffer mocking, spitting flogging, and death, yet would be rising on the third day. THIS IS OUR HOPE. Though death feels strong; YET DEATH DOES NOT WIN!

John 11:25

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.’”

We return to the proclamation of Jesus Christ. He has proclaimed: **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE!** Do you believe this? This temporal death will not be the end. You, Christian, will rise again.