

# GOD IS KEEPING HIS PROMISES IN ORDER TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN

## Exodus 6:1-12

*Please review this week's catechism question. I really want you to.*

### INTRODUCTION

Describe a person whom you admire due to his or her overcoming great obstacles, disabilities or sufferings to accomplish something great. Do you agree or disagree: The greatness of a person's character and ability is most clearly revealed when they accomplish great things against great odds? Why or why not?

In Exodus 6, we discover that God has arranged the circumstances of the world in order to make a name for himself. He has brought Moses and the Israelites into this impossible situation for the purpose of displaying his power and his love in ways never before seen. That is the point of v. 3. When God tells Moses that he revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty but not as Yahweh he does not mean that they didn't know what to call him. Rather, they didn't know his true and full nature, his character. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew that God was glorious, but they didn't know how glorious. There are no miracles in Genesis 12-50. Those men followed God based upon his promises. They never experienced any fulfillment of the promises God made. They didn't know him as well as Moses and Israel are about to know him. God tells Moses that the ultimate purpose behind all that God has been doing is so that Moses and Israel would know who God really is; they would know his name or his glory in all its fullness. In this conversation God has with Moses we are going to see how it is that God makes his name known to his people.

### STUDY

1. Summarize the conditions that Israel is living in and how they and Moses have responded to these conditions. See Exodus 5.

*They are slaves in Egypt and work from sunup to sundown for their pitiless Egyptian masters. Their slavery has just become more brutal due to Moses telling Pharaoh to let the nation Israel go for three days into the wilderness to worship the Lord. The Israelites are being required to make bricks but they are not being given the straw they need to make the bricks. They must collect the straw in addition to making the bricks. The Egyptian slave masters are beating the Hebrew foremen for not continuing to make the same number of bricks. The brutality of their conditions and the misery they are living in cannot be overstated. Moses, at the end of chapter 5, accused God of doing nothing to save his people. He called God a liar and a do-nothing God. He cannot comprehend how God's statement that he cares about his people and that he is going to save them can be true in light of the misery that has come upon the people of Israel.*

2. In light of Moses' statements at the end of chapter 5, what is surprising about vv. 1-12?

*Moses views the presence of evil and the suffering of the "innocent" as proof that God is impotent and not worthy of trust. Yet, surprisingly, God speaks with him and explains to him what is going on. Don't miss the incredible grace of God shown in these verses. The people of Israel and Moses have insulted the Lord of the universe and consider him a nobody. Yet, he persists in explaining himself to them. He persists in working for their salvation. God saves and uses Moses, not due to anything in Moses but due to his own grace.*

3. What is the significance of the word "now" with which God begins his speech?

*The word "now" is incredibly important. In essence, God says to Moses, "I have been working to bring about this set of circumstances since the beginning of the world so that now I can display the glory of my nature in the salvation of this people. I set this time, before I created the world to fulfill my promise to deliver Israel and to make them my people. Everything has been arranged to bring about these circumstances so that now I can make my name known, my glory shall become visible, in the salvation of my people." At least 766 years have gone by since God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans and*

*promised to make him into a great nation and give him and his descendants the land of Canaan. God has orchestrated all of those centuries in order to bring about his state of affairs so Moses (and Israel and we also) will be able to see what he is going to do to Pharaoh.*

**4.** How do John 13:30-31, Galatians 4:4-5 and 1:13-16 and Ephesians 1:11-12 show this same point?

*God is in charge of all of history. He arranged all things so that at the betrayal of Judas, the full glory of the Father and the Son would be revealed in the death of Christ for the sins of his people. Paul says the same thing that Christ was born at the “fullness of time”. God sent his son into the world at just the right time, not a day too early, nor too late. Additionally, God saved the apostle Paul at exactly the right moment. All of Paul’s life prior to God’s decision to reveal the Son in him was part of God’s preparation to glorify himself in the salvation and subsequent ministry of Paul. God is working out all things in conformity with the purpose of his will. He has a “now” for every event that happens. There are no accidents in the universe.*

**5.** According to vv. 2-5 why is God going to deliver Israel now?

*First, he is going to act against Pharaoh now because he wants to reveal the fullness of his glory, his name to Moses and Israel. Second, he is going to do it because he made a covenant, a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give them the land of Canaan. He is a faithful God. He always keeps his promises and so he is going to act to fulfill his promise. Third, he is going to do it because of the misery that his people are in. He loves his people and wants to relieve their suffering.*

**6.** Why didn’t God act sooner? Why didn’t he remember his covenant sooner? Why didn’t he act to relieve the suffering of his people sooner?

*The ultimate purpose in all of this is the revealing of his name. There was never a time prior to this when his “name” could be truly known. We may not like it, but that is what he tells Moses.*

**7.** How does it make you feel to know that God is working out a very detailed plan in order to reveal the glory of his name?

**God makes himself known to his people by saving them in his time.**

**8.** In v. 6, God tells Moses to deliver a message to the Israelites. Why does he want Moses to give this message? Why doesn’t he simply act and go deliver them?

*I think there are at least three reasons that God wants Moses to give this message to Israel. First, these words are meant to fill Israel with hope. These promises that God now makes are designed for them so that they will endure their suffering full of joy and peace and hope. Like prisoners in German concentration camps who heard that the Allies had landed on Normandy and were advancing across France knew that it was only a matter of time until they were free, so God’s people will know that victory is won, freedom is only a short ways away. Second, these words are also meant to be a witness to them that it is the Lord who is acting to save them. When they end up delivered from their slavery, they will not be able to give the credit to anyone other than the Lord. No one else told them what was going to happen and so only he can receive the glory for what happens. Third, he wants Moses to know how hopeless the situation is so that he will know that God alone saves.*

**9.** The message begins and ends with “I myself am ‘I AM’ (Yahweh).” Why does God begin and end the message in this way?

*It isn’t just anybody making these promises. The Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe is pledging himself to the eternal welfare of these people. The God who needs no one and nothing but upon whom all things depend is guaranteeing their salvation. The God whose love overflowed into creating the universe has determined to love this particular people. It is this God who guarantees their salvation. If you are facing bankruptcy and your 6 year old tells you, “Don’t worry dad, I’ll take care of your financial problems,” you are still going to worry. But if your multi-million dollar uncle calls you up and says, “I heard about your financial trouble and I want you to*

*know that I will pay off your debts for you,” you won’t worry, you’ll be calm.*

**10.** This message is the gospel. It is comprised of seven “I will” statements that can be divided into three basic categories. What are the three categories?

*The first three declare God’s determination to deliver them from their slavery. The second two state his purpose to make them his people. The third announces his plan to give them the land of Canaan.*

**11.** How are these NT promises the fulfillment of the promises in vv. 6-8?

- Titus 2:14: *Christ died to redeem us from all wickedness. We are slaves to wickedness and he buys us out of our slavery. In addition, he not only redeems us but then he makes us his very own people.*
- Romans 6:18 & 22: *Every Christian used to be a slave to sin but now, through out union with Christ in his death and resurrection we have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God and his righteousness.*
- 2 Timothy 2:25-26: *God, in giving us the gift of repentance, has delivered us from our captivity to Satan.*
- Hebrews 2:14-15: *Christ by his death has destroyed Satan and delivered us from our fear of death.*
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 & 3:18: *We are now the people of God through Christ.*
- Ezekiel 36:24 & Philippians 3:20: *God is gathering us, his people, out of the nations of the world and bringing us back to our own land, heaven.*
- Hebrews 11:14-16: *We are looking for our heavenly home.*

➤ Revelation 21:1-8: *Our final dwelling place will be the new heaven and the new earth. God is giving us our very own land to dwell in, through Christ.*

**12.** How does it affect you to know that God has promised to deliver you from your slavery to sin and Satan, make you a part of his people and bring you to your new, heavenly home through Christ?

**God makes himself known to his people by saving them in his way.**

**13.** How do the Israelites respond to this message from God delivered by Moses?

*They don’t listen to him. They ignore these promises. The word of God has absolutely no effect upon them. The words of Moses are to them a fairy tale. Nice ideas but no practical help. They ignore Moses and go on living in their slavery with no hope, no joy, no peace, no anticipation.*

**14.** Why do they respond this way?

*There are two reasons given. Literally they are: “because of vexation/impatience of spirit” and “because of the hardness of slavery”. These people are so overcome by their circumstances and their emotional distress that they ignore the promises of God.*

**15.** Is it wrong for them to not listen to God’s promises? Does God have a right to expect them to listen and believe? Are they guilty for not listening? See these two other occurrences of the same phrase: “vexation/impatience of spirit”, Numbers 21:4-7 & Job 21:4.

*In Numbers, the vexation of spirit they feel at their hard conditions causes them to complain against God. Then God, justly, punishes them for their unbelief by sending snakes. So God does not view their hard conditions and the emotional distress they have due to them as sufficient reasons for them not to believe him. Job, as a result of his suffering, impatiently demands that God explain himself to him. His “friends” try to tell him that the reason for the suffering is due to his sin. They say, God only sends suffering to wicked people and so Job*

*must be wicked. Job correctly rejects such a perverse explanation. However, he continues to demand that God explain himself. He insists that he has a right to have God explain himself. If you'll remember, God finally does answer Job but his answer is simply a rebuke of Job's demand to be answered. Essentially God tells Job he does not have a right to be impatient with God. God knows what he is doing and so he should be patient and trusting. In short, suffering and the emotional distress caused by it are no excuse to not believe and act upon the promises of God.*

**16.** Have you ever used your circumstances or your emotions as an excuse to not trust God's promises?

**17.** Immediately after Moses' message from God is rejected by the Israelites, God commands Moses to go command Pharaoh to let Israel go. How does Moses respond to this command?

*Moses has been completely undone by the despondency and unbelief of the people of Israel. If his words had no effect upon the people of God then how in the world will they have any effect upon the cruel king, Pharaoh? Moses' vision is filled with the negative circumstances, not the glorious Lord of the universe and his promises. What Moses says is that he has "uncircumcised lips."*

**18.** What does it mean for Moses to say he has "uncircumcised lips"? See Deut. 30:6 & Jeremiah 6:10.

*I don't think Moses is referring to the fact that he is not a good speaker, that he has "faltering lips". What he is saying is that his lips do not have divine power. Uncircumcision is regularly used throughout the OT in this figurative way. It identifies people and bodily organs as being devoid of divine life and power (uncircumcised hearts, ears, hands, etc.). Moses is convinced, due to the fact that the Israelites did not listen to him, that his words have no divine enabling. This is in spite of the fact that he is speaking the words God told him to speak. He too is overcome with despondency and unbelief. Like Israel he refuses to believe what God has clearly said. He believes that because he did not experience the results he thought he ought to experience that God is not working.*

**19.** Have you ever felt powerless to do what God commands you to do?

**20.** Why has Moses recorded these very negative responses on the part of himself and the Israelites?

*We are again given a graphic picture of human unbelief and impotence. The astonishing thing continues to be God's commitment to these people. He graciously continues to work for their salvation. As a result of seeing this human sin and weakness, we are reminded that salvation is of the Lord. What we are about to witness cannot be explained by human work. God does not use Moses or deliver Israel because of who they are but because of who he is. Only God can enable Moses to speak, only God can change Pharaoh, only God can bring out Israel, and only God can give Israel faith. Our salvation is outside of us; it does not depend upon us. If salvation depended upon us, then we would be lost.*

**God makes himself known to his people by saving them in spite of their unbelief and impotence.**