

Unleavened Bread And The Holy Spirit (Part Two)

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We here in the United States of America continue to be fed a steady diet of news items that clearly show that America is continuing on its ongoing moral and spiritual decline.

During April, our President, Joe Biden, became the first American president in modern history to omit God in both word and deed from the National Day of Prayer proclamation, which each president does each and every year since it was first done April 17, 1952 by then (also Democratic) President Harry Truman. (That was 69 years ago and that is the same period of years Evelyn and I have been married.) By way of contrast, I am going to give you a bit of what President Harry Truman's opening remarks were announcing by proclamation, given when the National Day of Prayer was instituted. I will not read the entire proclamation but I will read enough to give you a feeling for the difference between Democratic President Harry Truman and Democratic President Joe Biden.

Whereas from the earliest days of our history, people have been accustomed to turn to Almighty God for help and guidance, and whereas in times of national crisis, when we are striving to strengthen the foundations of peace and security, we stand in special need of divine support [and incidentally, the Korean War was on at that time]. Whereas the Congress, by a joint resolution approved on April 17, 1952, has provided that the president shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a national day of prayer on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation, . . ."

What a change in approach. Our present president *never even mentioned God* in his proclamation for a national day of prayer. Now, this is important to the American public because the American public receives some of its political, and therefore its moral sense of direction from the top down. The President

is looked to for guidance for those people who do not have something like a church or a club, or some other kind of an organization that they look to for those things. The American people look to their president. Based on what is already being revealed by the President's administration, the near future years are going to continue to be filled with misdirection away from righteousness to a greater extent than ever before. The very fact that he never mentioned God in this shows that God is not on his mind. That was a National Day of Prayer set aside to *appeal* to God and he never mentioned God in word or deed within his proclamation.

The national government is doing all they can to force themselves between God and the American people. But the church of God moves on as well and in my previous sermon in this specific festival season, I stressed the use God made of unleavened bread as the Israelites made ready for their departure from Egypt, and then they actually used the instruction He gave them when that time arrived in the Israelitish nation that was being formed by God.

Now mark this usage well in your personal history of the nation being formed around the spiritual descendants of Abraham and Sarah. Richard mentioned in his sermon last week that it says in the Bible, we are to look to our roots. Abraham and Sarah are where our family roots in this spiritual family are. This grouping within the church of God includes converted Gentiles. Now I mentioned that because I want to make sure that we understand that the church of God is not all Israelitish.

The word "unleavened" first appears in Genesis 19 as a part of the meal that Lot hastily made for the two angels as they were urging Lot to get himself and his family out of Sodom while the getting was still available. The Israelite's usage of unleavened bread though was specifically assigned by God through Moses before the departure day actually arrived. They were specifically assigned to use and eat unleavened bread as a portion of the Passover meal while still in Egypt. I am also sure that they did not really understand why.

Now, the instructions for that initial event are quite detailed and included the command that they were to continue eating unleavened bread for seven days. Did you get that? They were to eat it for seven days—one right after the other. If any of you remember back in the early 90s, the leadership of the

Worldwide Church of God was telling people they did not have to eat it for seven days. If they did not feel like eating it, they did not have to eat it. God said though, eat it for seven days! You could tell somebody was going off track there in that leadership.

It is interesting that God said nothing, in that preamble to their leaving, about the Israelites' overcoming sin was what broke the Egyptian bondage and set them free. Because it did not. The term Passover simply means "to skip over," "to spare." So what God did is He spared the Israelites from dying regardless of their birth order in their families as the Egyptian firstborn were being put to death. When the Egyptians realized the effects of that one plague, the Egyptians were almost to the point of chasing the Israelites out of Egypt. That is an exaggeration of course, but it is, historically, not far from the truth.

Despite the other nine plagues to hit the Egyptian way of life, each of which it could have been argued as occurring as a result of randomly occurring natural forces, the Egyptians, you know, they could laugh it off and say they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and therefore they suffered losses. Tragic, maybe, at that time. But it was that killing of the firstborn that broke their spirit of resistance to defend their way of life. Those deaths were devastating losses that chose only very specific ones to slay. They could not be reasoned away as something just naturally occurring and that is why their spirit broke because they were beginning to realize that there is a God.

You might remember the scene in "The Ten Commandments" movie when Yul Brynner, acting as Pharaoh, sat before a statue of one of his gods with a scowl on his face and slumped shoulders as his wife taunted and berated him as being less than a man, let alone Pharaoh. And his reply to her was wistfully, but also resignedly delivered. He said, "Moses' God is God." That realization broke him pretty much as well.

The unleavened bread was not a sign to mark the Israelites had accomplished by overcoming their nature. Virtually everything the Israelites did before leaving was something that was mental in nature, and that is believing that Moses was saying what God was doing or going to do in order to free them from the Egyptian bondage. Now we are far removed timewise from the reality of God breaking their bondage. But God has not changed His

procedure. It is still God who breaks our bondage to this world and its systems too.

I am giving this sermon because God wants us to understand it. It is important to our conversion. It is important to the efforts that we put in the overcoming and growing. To know that He was the one who chose us and we have a direct communication with Him, an association with Him. God wants us to understand this, and that is why it appears practically at the beginning of the book of Exodus. He wants it established that it is *God who chooses us!* Let that sink in. We did not just randomly decide that we were going to worship God, not when He calls. Because He makes Himself known to us, otherwise we would never find Him. And that is what the first part of this sermon is going to be devoted to.

It is a biblical fact that our creation into a member of God's Family begins and ends with God. Did you hear that? *Begins and ends with God.* It is His creation and we are part of that creation. Jesus most certainly has a major role in our creation, but God most certainly never wants us to ever forget that He told the Israelites exactly, word for word, what He wanted them to teach the next generation about the exodus, what He wanted the parents to tell their children about the exodus.

Now we, most of us in this room, have made our exodus from the world. Did you ever know this before? That He wants us to mark it with unleavened bread! You did not know that before, most of you. That is why we eat unleavened bread. God tells us directly it is because of what *He* did. Not what the Israelites did, but what He did to get them out of the world—their world, the Egyptian world—and what He is still doing today. It is He who brings us to Jesus Christ. He made a choice and that choice included you, and me as well. Now, once we understand He wants us to carry forward forward with the same understanding that He gave to those that He freed from Egypt. We owe the fact of being free of the bondage to sin and death to God the Father. He had billions of people to choose from. So I want you to understand, brethren, we have a lot on our plate to pass on to our kids.

Let us turn to Ephesians 1, starting in verse 1. I am reading it because it is directly written to the New Testament church, not the Israelites.

Ephesians 1:1-12 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved [that is, the church]. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, He might gather together in one [that is, one body, one Family] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works [he uses the word "predestined" again] according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

All these verses directly give us a succinct overview of our calling. It was planned by the Father and He did it.

Let us go to another place where this subject comes up. It is going to be in the book of John, chapter 6. We are going to first look at verse 44 and you cannot ask for better authority than this.

John 6:44 "No one [Jesus said] can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

I want this to mean something to us. Do you understand that? It is the Father who draws us to the Son. He knows who He wants in His Family and He does not fool around when He sets his mind to it. Man, that ought to fill us with chills to know that the Great God who created everything knows us

personally and individually, and says, "I want him or her. Here, go to Christ." Now, we will expand on that a little bit further. Let us go back to verse 32.

John 6:32-45 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. [Who leads us to the bread? Do you see that? That is what He is saying. It is the Father who led you to Me.] For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." And then they said to Him, "Lord [these are the Jews saying this], give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet you do not believe. [Here He came from heaven. He was God in the flesh.] All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me, I will by no means cast out. [What a promise! He is going to accept us even as He accepted the apostles that He chose, and He accepts us into His company because the Father sent us to Him. What an honor!] For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. [Brethren, I want us to see what Jesus is saying here applies to us directly.] The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' [Every one of us are being taught by God.] Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

Jesus knew that they did not understand what He was saying, but I hope that we are in the position where we have learned to trust what Jesus Christ says, and that we have all come to Jesus Christ as a result of what the Father has done. Jesus knew that these people did not grasp what He was saying because of the flow of their statements. But if a person truly comes to Christ, Jesus most certainly will not cast the person away because His Father purposely sent that person to Him, and the Father sent them to Christ in order for Christ to give the Father assistance in putting the finishing touches on the person sent by God, so they will be ready for God's Family.

Now, one of the things He said that they disagreed with was that Jesus came down to earth from heaven. That triggered another reply from Jesus. Jesus explains that the Father draws people to Jesus by and through Jesus' teaching. He teaches us, He teaches others, but remember, these people were hearing Jesus directly, in person, and so Jesus was explaining something to them that they did not understand. Jesus explains that it was the Father drawing people to Jesus, and by Jesus' preaching. Jesus was rightly deferring to the Father's authority as Head of the Family to choose who He desires in His Family, and assigns them as Jesus' responsibility to help put the finishing touches on our creation into what God wants us to be. They are working together.

So, it is the Father who empowers those listening to Jesus, giving them (those listening to Jesus), the perception, the ability to grasp, to comprehend what Jesus is saying in His teaching. Jesus is not saying that He stepped into this world for a brief moment or two. He is simply saying that God flipped the switch in the person's mind and they began to get, they began to understand, they began to grasp, they *saw* what Jesus said and thus began or continued the process of conversion. Now that was happening to those Jews listening to Jesus right in person, but the same thing has happened to us as well, but in a different form that is all. It is the Father who leads us to the Son. Please understand that. Jesus does not go around touching people. He defers to the Father because the Father knows who He wants in the Family and He goes in that direction.

What we are looking at here is the working order of the Father and Son's creative process. This was done back in Genesis 1 as well as They began

creating. But we are now on the finishing touches of the creation of us in the preparation for entering the Family of God. The Father and the Son are both working on us. So it is the working order of Their creative process.

Brethren, let us get this straight: Israel's coming out is primarily about God overcoming Satan, the Egyptian world, and sin. It is not about the Israelites overcoming sin and thus coming out as a result of their efforts. I want to repeat that because the same process has brought us into the congregation of God's people. It was the Father who leads us to the Son, and it is the Father that stirs our minds so that we begin to understand, to grasp who Jesus is. That He is a Creator, just like the Father. He is God who became a man. And though we must make efforts to overcome even during the time of the beginning of our calling, the Days of Unleavened Bread and the eating of unleavened bread must be understood in this context or we are missing a major point. It is to mark what the Father did to bring us to where we are right now. I will bet you never thought unleavened bread had that responsibility to remind us of that.

We must understand for our relationship with God to confidently proceed that we must conduct our life believing and acting on these realities. The Father and Son are both involved in our lives.

One, that God is the Creator.

Two, but we still must strive to live His way with our life, and He will change us as He sees fit because He knows what He is preparing us for. Does that not make sense? It is He that is putting the Family together—it is His Family!—and He has already assigned Jesus Christ as High Priest and Savior. But we are going to be part of that team.

Now events in the outworking of His purpose move at His pace or we might even give up in despair regarding our life in Christ as being so slow paced. We are interested in doing things fast, fast, fast. But God's time is not the same as ours. He thinks in different parameters. So maybe it is so slow-paced because we are resisting strongly.

And third, we must believe He is literally working in us—both the Father and the Son.

Well, I am going to shift gears because I am going to back up in time in order for us to focus our thinking for a fair amount of time, as I continue this message about the analogy of Israel coming out of Egypt, by examining more carefully how much does God show regarding the Israelites actually overcoming to becoming free? That is, for the Israelites to becoming free. Why am I doing this? Because I do not want us to carry the burden of thinking the Israelites got out by by overcoming and growing. They did not. We are going to see that, for the most part, they were dragging their heels in regard to this.

Now, we do not possess a day-by-day-by-day account of all that was happening there in Egypt. But we do possess enough that the overall pattern is quite clear. I want you to check on me because what I am saying is going to be, I am sure, fairly accurate because I am going to read it right out of the Scriptures as to how these things unfolded. The overall extent of the Israelites' participation was to be convicted firmly enough that God was indeed working through Moses. Also, to believe sufficiently to spot their door posts and their lintels with blood, to prepare the lamb, eat the Passover meal, stay in their homes overnight, gather in Rameses the next day, and then walk out when the signal was given. I covered that in about six points.

I do not know how long it took for God to unfold those plagues on the Egyptians. But considering how difficult it is for us to overcome, and the Israelites were really no different than we are except that they were in bondage at this time, it took them a long time to overcome, even as it takes us a long time to overcome. Because they had to battle human nature as well as the bondage.

Now, there is no doubt that as we read that story unfold in the early chapters of Exodus, they were indeed showing some signs of a growing faith, but how much overcoming of their inborn carnality and acquired bad habits did they actually accomplish? When they left Egypt, did they leave sin? No, they did not. They took sin right with them because it was in their hearts. What they left was the *place* their sins were committed and therefore the place of their bondage. Egypt was symbolic of the world at large on a smaller scale. And we have long understood that the exodus is an analogy of a person's conversion, especially the earliest stages of our conversion.

So we are going to review the analogy as we head toward Pentecost. Let us go to Psalm 19. Now put yourself in this and see if you follow this general pattern. I chose this psalm for specific reasons.

Psalm 19:1-4 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice [that is, the voice of the created thing] is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, . . .

I chose this psalm because it is about the creation and I want us to make note that almost all of us before conversion had some concept of God. Everybody thinks a little bit about Him though we do not get much right because we need God's Holy Spirit and conversion. But almost everybody has some level of knowing about God and where He is. For some, the concept was fervently believed and practiced and they participated, even within a church. For most, the concepts though were vague, agnostic, and even atheistic. But the creation (this is why I chose this psalm), does provide a beachhead for some understanding about God and His participation in life. That is why I said all of us come who do come to God at least have some knowledge about God. At least God is being considered more thoughtfully than in the past. However vague and wrong our concept was, there is something for God to establish a beachhead to a relationship, if God desires one in this life.

We at least know from the Bible that He lives in a place called heaven. From there He creates and He governs, and most of the time one's beginning concepts of God are derived from the beauty, from the vastness of design, and the detailed eloquence of creation, and its mystery as well, so that one begins to almost intuitively know that there is more to life than meets the eye. Remember, we are talking now about as we are maybe beginning to come to God. Well, these things helped lead one to think of himself in terms of life that he had not thought of in this way before, as Nicodemus, everybody remembers Nicodemus, experienced in Christ's presence as he was talking to God.

But God adds something else as an incentive for all of us. And it turns out is written right in the book of Ecclesiastes. There is an interesting statement that is made there by Solomon. In verse one, just so you are familiar with where we are.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted.

Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Solomon is talking here about how things change on earth. That is, the business of life.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? [Solomon says] I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He [He is God. Look at all these things that he mentions here that there is a time for within life.] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts [He is talking about human beings born on this earth.], except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

Now, this particular verse and this particular word, eternity, gives scholars fits. Most scholars seem to believe the word "world," which many Bibles have in it (the King James has it, this Bible has eternity) should be translated "eternity." This makes Solomon's assertion much more provocative within the context. Within the context, God is showing it possible for even dramatic changes of life to occur. That is what he is talking about, how things change in life and how human beings have to live with one circumstance after another and the circumstances will change.

But verse 11 gives the scholars fits. It is generally disturbing to scholars who consider it the most difficult statement in all of the book of Ecclesiastes, because nobody is absolutely sure how the word "world" came to be there, because most are quite sure it must be mistranslated. These scholars tend to

believe that God places within mankind a weak desire to worship God. Now there is some proof for this, in that no matter how primitive people are, tribes, no matter what part of the world they are in, they are worshipping some god.

In addition to that, these scholars also feel, and this is why the word is translated now eternity, that mankind has in him a desire to live forever. But unfortunately, this yearning for immortality is not necessarily according to God's desires for mankind's attention. But it is there. And this is Solomon's understanding, that somehow or another it is God who put that into mankind, that there is within us a weak yearning to worship God. It is not strong enough for us to learn anything, but it is part of the bridgehead that very possibly God put within man so that he responds to God's calling. What this is showing is that is quite a change that occurs in a person's life. These scholars also tend to believe this yearning is, for most of humanity, little more than simply a curiosity, and I think that they are right.

Whether for good or bad, this conclusion helps one understand that, if it is right, why God is angry. So few seriously follow through with fervency towards seeking the Creator God. And God justifiably claims with honesty that mankind is without excuse in Romans 1. You understand that? God is justifiably upset because man does not follow through with his yearnings for immortality and for worshipping God. But man at least has in many cases a bridgehead established in believing in a Creator and creation alone. However, creation alone gives no one sure direction in which way to go, and we all just get swept along with the tide of events impacting on us until God mercifully and miraculously begins to stir our minds to begin to think more concretely about God, about life, and its purpose.

Once again, I want to remind you to recall the meeting with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a well educated Jew, but he had never thought the way that Jesus was teaching him to think. Now the Israelites in Egypt, like Nicodemus, were spiritually hopelessly drifting along, but even so, crying out to God in circumstances that were beyond their control. They were groaning, the Bible says, under the burden of their everyday life without even knowing that God was already taking steps for their salvation. Do you understand that in many cases that happened to us. I did not know I was being called when I was being called. That was in the late 50s. I did not

know it and I think most of you are that way too. Nicodemus did not know and he was a Jewish doctor of the law. But you see, we have been prepared by God to be able to be called.

Let us go from here to Exodus. What I am going to show you here is that the Israelites did not overcome their way out of their bondage. And neither do we. God is the Creator.

Exodus 2:23-25 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. [I want you to notice. God is paying attention to what is going on in His creation. Notice these words.] So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

God was already working in their behalf. It is interesting to note how God works behind the scenes, out of the view of the one He has chosen to work with.

Now let us touch bases with Abraham again. Go back to Genesis 15. We have to look to our roots and these are the roots of this Family that God is building.

Genesis 15:13-14 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they will come out with great possessions."

God had it all planned out long before Moses was born. God had it all planned out by the time He made a deal with Abram. He knew what He was going to do. It is hard to deal with a mind like that who predestines people before they are even created. Because He knows what He wants to accomplish and He is going to accomplish. Can we be confident in that? It is hard to deal with a person who has the mind like that!

Now the Israelites did not work their way out of their bondage. That has to be understood so that I can pass it on to you to understand that we are not going to create character! God is the Creator—He creates. If creation is left up to us, then we are in sad shape. Look what we have created in this world. We have to allow Him room to do the creating. And it begins up here, when we let Him have His will in our lives, and we do what we can to follow the commands that He gives about the way that we should live. So God had it planned all along and He is making us to fit into the operation that He and the Son, Jesus Christ, are putting together who are going to rule over this earth whenever Jesus comes again.

The Israelites, like us, were totally unaware that God had this all planned out and He does it in such a way that we feel that we have a great deal of freedom. And we do, we do. Let us go now to Exodus 3 again.

Exodus 3:7-10 And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people [I want you to pay special attention to that. He is already calling Israel My people. That is how positive He can bring this to pass. If He did it for them and they were in that bondage, He is doing it for us! He is absolutely positive that He can accomplish what He wants to accomplish in our lives.] who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt.

He has already got it plotted out: so "that you may bring My children out of Israel." God handles us in such a way that we think we are alone and we are doing all the work. No, we are not.

Now the Israelites in Egypt, they thought they were stuck there. But God had already prepared Moses to be the one to lead them from their bondage and

they did not have the foggiest notion that this was going on. He did not call them "My people" because they loved Him, but because He loved them. Even in their unconverted state, He loved them. And, they did not realize it, but He was already beginning to take an active role in their lives, preparing them for their calling.

I want you to do this. We have not gone very far, but who is taking the initiative? Who is doing the leading, who is providing whatever it is that they needed to get out of Egypt? You know, one of the first things He did was He had Moses born, and then He allowed Moses to do a bad one and kill somebody so that he had to go somewhere else and live. But all the while that was going on, He was training Moses! How many years did it take Him to train Moses so that he would be able to lead the children of Israel out? It is no wonder Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." When we begin to get these pieces together and see how He works, it is no wonder He said that.

Here we are in Exodus the 3rd chapter. The salvation of Israel was already underway. Who is in charge? Who has the answers to their problems? It would be weeks before Israel would have any inkling of God's involvement. Then when they finally did grasp a bit of all they would have to do, would they actually simply do the things that He commanded? When did they hear something that was going to really appeal to them? Let us go to Exodus the 6th chapter. You would think it would appeal.

Exodus 6:2-9 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and have remembered My covenant. Therefore [He is telling Moses] say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land

which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.' So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of the anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.

What did they hear? They heard the gospel of Jesus Christ as it applied to them in their specific circumstance. Now, when we first heard the gospel, we probably reacted much the same as the Israelites. I know I did, I do not say that I disbelieved it with all my heart, but I did not fly to get in and say, "Boy, that's all for me." No, not at all.

So they heard fantastic good news, the gospel—good news. They heard it from Moses. But as soon as the Pharaoh turned up the heat, their joy was blasted by persecution and affliction. But God was beginning to work, and beginning to put a difference between Israel and Egypt. Brethren, in God's creative purposes, everything moves at God's set pace. Nobody rushes God.

Now, what was happening here that had to take place first? God uses this pattern all the time. A sanctification was taking place. God was separating a people who would be the focus of what He was doing and would be the focus of the anger of the Egyptians. Good testing to see whether faith was beginning to be built and whether these people were believing what was being told them by Moses.

In many cases, brethren, we had to face tests before we were ever really, truly called to come into the church. God does not want to lose us. How are we going to act? How are we going to react?

So a sanctification was taking place that was difficult for those God was working with to bear. And brethren, in many cases, and it applied to these people, it got worse as the plagues continued.

Exodus 8:20-22 The Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be

full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land."

What is God doing? He is doing two things at the same time. He is calling the Egyptians to task because of the way they are treating the Israelites, and He is going to show them that He Himself rules this creation and that He is going to benefit the Israelites so that they go free while the Egyptians are held back from what they would like to do in killing.

So I at least got you started. I hope that if there is anything that you learned from this, it is a reinforcement that you were called by God Himself. Then you were handed off, as it were, to Jesus Christ. And the two of Them working together are going to create us in Their image.