

The Tale of Two Leaders

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I want to thank you. And rather than say goodbye, I'll just say we're going to push pause on all the conversations we've had with you all. And we'll pick them up again sometime.

I don't know when. Maybe it'll be in heaven. But we are so blessed by all of you. Thank you for your hospitality and your kindness towards Ann and I and your patience in listening to me.

I pray that the Lord is exalted and that the time we've been together has been helpful and pointed you to Christ. That's my goal. We started off Friday night talking about the Deuteronomy 6 home.

And really everything we've done since then has been building on that. And I want to talk just for a second about one aspect of that. And that is the role of the church in your home.

We talked about leadership in the church. I think that was Saturday morning. It all runs together a little bit. But when we talked about leadership in the church, really the emphasis there is the role of the church in your home.

[1 : 0 4] And it was to reinforce what Moses was saying, which is the most effective parenting is parenting that knows the word of God. The most effective leadership of the home is leadership that is knowing God's word.

And living God's word. And therefore, by word and by deed, teaching God's word. BK said it this morning.

He's the preacher. So it was probably way more effective than how I said it. It was certainly direct that I think you remember his three points from this morning. That outside of that foundation, you're wasting your time.

And so that has been the goal this weekend is to reinforce that and to exalt our God and to explore various aspects of who God is as a way to build the foundation in the leadership of your home of that which we are commanded in Deuteronomy 6 to know.

And that is who God is and what he's done. And that comes from the study of the word of God. This session, I want to address how we view the world around us from the standpoint of what we might call political leadership or world leadership.

[2 : 2 5] In other words, those leaders who deeply impact us, who we will never meet, you might get to vote for them or against them. But regardless, you're just one of millions and millions of people that have a say.

But the Lord appoints that leadership. And that leadership makes decisions that can be as godless as godless can be. And it might be as godly as godly can be.

But whatever it is, the impact of those decisions lie with us, maybe even more than with them.

And how do you view that? And how do we view that through the prism of scripture or the frame of scripture and our understanding of who God is?

I want to think about how we think about those leaders around us, really those who lead the world, whether they're presidents or kings or prime ministers, members of parliament, senators, governors, those people.

[3 : 27] And there's a lot of material in scripture that enlightens this. As you consider who's in charge and how to think about them, the Bible is authoritative and it is helpful.

And it's good for the leadership of the home to focus on that aspect of who God is as you lead and direct your family through a culture.

That's really what we're talking about is a culture in which our families exist and in which the Bible says our families are autonomous and independent in his economy in terms of authority from that authority structure.

And I want to address this by looking at the story of Moses and Pharaoh. And this covers Exodus 1 through 14. So you have three hours? Yeah, no, we're going to go really fast.

I want to give you the biography, really, of Moses and Pharaoh and show you the similarities and the differences. And these are illustrative and helpful as we process political and national and economic news in the world.

[4 : 34] I'm not looking to give you three elements of good leadership or bad or the four steps to determine who you should vote for. Personally, I don't care who you vote for.

And that would be missing the point. The point of Scripture is that who you vote for really isn't the right question. And it doesn't lead you to the right conclusions.

It's how do you view and how do you submit to the leadership that's over us. So this is the story of two men. They are leaders of their two nations. They're involved in a high stakes and dramatic series of confrontations that you're probably familiar with.

And at stake were the fate of nations. The fate of nations and a lot of people, millions of people were hanging in the balance. And it's ultimately really about the nature and authority of God.

That's really who we're talking about tonight. But as we get there, there's two aspects of leadership, national leadership or political leadership that exists in tension and need to be addressed.

[5 : 35] They're almost another one of those. You don't need to, your decisions don't matter, make good decisions. This is kind of another one of those.

First, the first aspect of it is that government or political leadership is ordained and appointed by God for our good. And also for his glory.

Government, properly functioning, as described in Romans 13, restrains evil and it promotes good. It rewards good.

And when people reject the authority of government leaders for whatever reason, the Bible makes clear, as does history, that sin, chaos, and disorder are the result.

If you ever read the book of Judges, and I recommend it, this is the era of the nation of Israel when they said, we don't want a king anymore. We want judges.

[6 : 33] And the summary at the end of all of that, Judges 21, 25 says, In those days there was no king in Israel, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

The structure of governance had broken down as God had designed it. That's on the one end. The second end that we have to consider is that wicked, evil, godless political leadership is both a reflection of the people in that nation, and it also leads the nation further into evil and certain and terrible circumstances and consequences.

This is not new. All the kings of Israel and most of the kings of Judah were described in 1 and 2 Kings. If you've ever read through 1 and 2 Kings, you're familiar with this.

Almost all of those kings described in there were described with the words, They had done evil in the sight of the Lord. There are very few exceptions to that.

And as the kings went, the people went with them and vice versa. And you can read of the devastation of the afflicted in Psalm 12, 4 in each of those accounts.

[7 : 52] So we must submit to government as God's ministers of good. We must also think about what to do with evil political leadership.

Such leadership is the cause of evil, but it's also the result of the evil within the people that they lead. And it is the consequence. And it can be the judgment of God against a nation and against a world.

Excuse me. So let's look at Exodus. I'm going to look through the first 14 chapters. You don't have to turn through it. If you want to turn to where I'm going to end up in about 10 minutes, it's Exodus 9.

Exodus 9, 14 through 17 is where we're going to spend the last 15, 20 minutes of our time. But I need to get you there in understanding the context.

We need to remember that this is a story of God. Yes, Pharaoh and Moses are central players. But as with any other national drama, God is at the center of it.

[9 : 01] And he is the architect of it. And he is the implementer of it. This isn't a discussion about politics. It's about how we view the political process, the world leaders through the frame of who God is.

And starting in Exodus 1 is a tale of two leaders and the fate of two countries. And to do that story, first we have to understand Egypt. Egypt is at the center of this story.

And Egypt is a desert with a river running through it. If a river wasn't running through Egypt, we would never have heard about or read about or cared about Egypt. That river is the Nile River.

The Nile provided life, economic life, food, practical sustenance. It was the source of water for the nation, meat, fish, and it was fertile soil.

Because it was the end in Egypt is the end of a river that travels 4,228 miles. And as it travels that 4,228 miles through Africa, it picks up soil and it drops it all into the fertile end of the river in Ethiopia.

[10 : 13] So the soil from the Ethiopian highlands are deposited in the Egyptian basin delta, producing the soil that enabled Egypt to feed the world.

That soil is why in almost every account in the Old Testament, when you read about a famine, people raced to Egypt. Because that's where the food was.

This was also then a source of enormous wealth and power for Egypt. When you control the food, you can make a lot of money and you control the world.

That's Egypt. So let's look at the nation of Israel. This is the other nation involved in this. And in chapter 1 of Exodus, it says that the Israelites were captive within Egypt.

And by chapter 1 of Exodus, they had been in Egypt for 280 years. 280 years captive. Just to give you some perspective, 280 years ago was 1744.

[11 : 19] I don't think any of us were here then, were we? That's a long time ago. And since the end of Genesis, the captives grew from 70 men to approximately 600,000 males.

They were multiplying and filling the earth. It says in chapter 1, verse 7 of Exodus, But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty so that the land was filled with them.

What had happened is Egypt took in 70 captives. And what resulted 280 years later was a nation within a nation. They had a problem. As we'll see in a minute.

They were a national security issue. But they were also an economic powerhouse because they provided the slave labor which allowed Egypt to feed the world. And then in verse 8 of chapter 1, it says, A new king arose in Egypt.

In verse 9, it says, That new king said to his people, Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them or else they will multiply. And in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us and fight against us and depart from the land.

[12 : 34] A very practical king. A very wise king. He gets what the problem is. So in verse 11, this king appoints taskmasters.

They were appointed to hurt these people. To afflict them, it says. With hard labor. And the harder they worked, the more they multiplied. That's in verse 12 of chapter 1.

And in verse 13, it describes how Egypt made their life bitter with hard labor. And they kept having babies. And then there's the first attempt by the new king to stop this population growth.

In verses 15 to 16, he sends out a decree to kill all the boys but spare the girls. And this failed. And it failed because it says in verse 17 that the midwives feared God.

And they did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them but let the boys live. There's a second attempt because there's a new king by now. In verse 22, and the new king comes down and says, Every son who is born, you are to cast into the Nile.

[13 : 43] And every daughter, you are to keep alive. So they were going to control the population growth at the point of birth. Throw the boys in the Nile. That should start ringing familiar to you if you know the story of Moses.

Because that is the context in chapter 2 of Moses arriving. He was born at the beginning of chapter 2. The daughter of Pharaoh saves Moses and raises him as her own.

You're probably familiar with that story. He's raised in the culture, the wealth, and the power of Pharaoh's family for 40 years. He grows as a boy, as a young man, into a middle-aged man in the home of Pharaoh, which means he knows all the players.

And they all know him. When he's 40 years old, he goes out of the palace to visit his people. And this is his first recorded public act.

Verse 11 of chapter 2, it says, Now it came about in those days when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors.

[14 : 54] And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way, and he looked that way. He's looking around.

And when he saw no one was around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. That's Bible speak for he murdered him. That's Moses' first recorded public act.

He thinks there's no witnesses. But the very next day, as he's trying to break up a fight between two Hebrews, one of them says, Who made you a prince or a judge over us?

Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? Then Moses was afraid and said, Surely the matter has become known. And indeed it had.

Because in verse 15, it says that Pharaoh heard of the matter. He tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian.

[15 : 56] Now to give you some perspective, that is in modern day northwest Saudi Arabia. So he is exiled out of Egypt, away from his nation, his adopted nation, and his people.

And he is in what is today Saudi Arabia. He gets married and he has a family. That's the last we hear of Moses for another 40 years.

And then we hear about him when he is 80 years old in Exodus chapter 3. He's 80, and he's called by God to rescue his people. That's where you read about the burning bush encounter with God.

There's the preparation and training of Moses. It's recorded in Exodus 3. In there, God tells him what to say to the Israelites. First he tells them what his name is, I Am.

And then verse 17, he says, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land flowing with milk and honey. And here's promises. They will pay heed to what you say.

[17 : 00] The king of Egypt will not permit you to go except under compulsion. I will stretch out my hand. I will grant this people favor. You will plunder the Egyptians.

That is the God of the universe telling Moses how this is all going to go down. In Exodus chapter 4, Moses demonstrates either genuine humility or just total fear.

Moses says to God, what if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, the Lord has not appeared to you. They may not believe him. In response, God shows Moses a number of miracles which we won't go through.

And even after that demonstration in verse 10, Moses said to the Lord, please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since you have spoken to your servant, for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.

He's telling the God of the universe, not me. You picked the wrong guy. God responds in verse 11, the Lord said to him, who has made man's mouth or who makes him mute or deaf, seeing or blind?

[18 : 13] Is it not I, the Lord? Now then go. And I, even I will be your mouth and teach you what you are to say. Moses responds, he pushes back again.

And he says, please, Lord, now send the message by whomever you will. Moses is negotiating with God. Send someone other than me.

He believes he knows better than God and he has the standing to defy God. And he doesn't. God is angry, it says in verse 14, the anger of the Lord burned against Moses.

And he said, is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? And then he says, you and your brother, can go together. Verse 19 says, now the Lord said to Moses and Midian, go back to Egypt for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.

God knows that Moses is a murderer. And he sends him anyway. He chose him to lead his nation. So Moses obeys the Lord.

[19 : 21] At this point, he doesn't do a Jonah. He goes back to Egypt. And that brings us to chapter 5 of Exodus. And it says, and afterwards, Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, they are now talking to each other.

And by the way, Moses ultimately submits and he obeys. In this, I won't detail this as we go through it, but in a series of confrontations with Pharaoh, at first, it's Moses and Aaron, and Aaron does some of the talking, and then it's Moses and Aaron with Moses talking, and then it's just Moses.

He submits, he obeys. Moses says, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go, that they may celebrate a feast to me in the wilderness. But Pharaoh said, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?

I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go. But the king of Egypt said to them, or I'm sorry, Moses and Aaron, I think Aaron actually replies, and the king of Egypt says to him, Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work?

Get back to your work. Again, Pharaoh said, look at the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors. All Pharaoh cares about is the work, the people, the power that they brought.

[20 : 47] So we need to introduce Pharaoh. And I need to tell you that at this point, nobody can identify who this Pharaoh is. It's remarkable. This famous Pharaoh has no name, cannot be identified.

He's only known by his behavior and his title, the Pharaoh. He was immensely powerful, wealthy, and by all estimations, an effective, bold, aggressive, successful, and confident leader.

He was the prototype of a powerful leader. He was also as pagan as they came, and what's interesting is history has indeed blotted out his name.

And I remember once, I talked about this at my church, and there were two men there who were visiting that morning from Egypt, and they were Egyptologists. They were there to do a guest lecture at UCLA, and they came up to me afterwards, and I thought, uh-oh.

And they said, we have researched this, and you're absolutely right. Nobody can figure out who this man was, what his lineage was.

[21 : 58] It's really interesting. And I guess we'll find out why as we move on. But the story goes on in Exodus 5. Pharaoh issues an order that the Israelites were to work even harder.

The people come to appeal to Pharaoh, and he gets very, very angry. You are lazy, very lazy, he says to them. And he orders even more harsh treatment, including beatings and cruel labor and murder.

And from the perspective of the Israelites now, life has gotten even harder with Moses than it was before Moses got there. And they start to grumble about Moses and to Moses.

Here's the guy who came to deliver them, who came and said, the Lord picked me and sent me to deliver you. And all that's happened is, their brothers and sisters and fathers and uncles are being killed and tortured more than ever by Pharaoh.

And Moses hasn't done anything to placate Pharaoh. He's just made him more mad. And you can read in chapter 5 about how they come to Moses and Aaron, and they say, we wish we were back in Egypt.

[23 : 13] It was better in Egypt. And you can see that Moses doesn't lead well. He doesn't take him back to who God is and what he's done. What he does, he says, stay right here for a minute.

And he goes to God and says the same thing to God. But God in his patience doesn't wipe Moses out. God has a plan. So that takes us to chapter 6.

And at the end of chapter 5, Moses asks God, why did you send me? Things have gotten worse, not better. The beginning of Exodus 6, verse 1, the Lord says to Moses, now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.

For under compulsion, he will let them go. And under compulsion, he will drive them out of the land. That is a very important verse in the book of Exodus.

Because that is a prophecy, a promise. There's actually two promises there from God that are somewhat, they seem contradictory. And here's the point. Moses goes to God on behalf of the people and says, what are you doing?

[24 : 20] You sent me here to deliver. Things have gotten worse. And God doesn't clarify anything. From a human perspective. He muddies the water, actually.

Here's his promises. Pharaoh's going to let them go. And Pharaoh's going to drive them out of the land. Which one is it? Yes.

And both of those are going to be under compulsion. Makes no sense from a human standpoint. From where Moses was, that could not have made any sense to him. It's so interesting that God's response to Moses' complaint is not clarity.

It's muddy water. His response would have caused a lot of confusion. But then the plagues begin. And from chapter 7 through chapter 12 are the 10 plagues.

And there's a pattern. God announces a plague. Moses goes to Pharaoh and describes the coming plague and calls for Pharaoh to let his people go to avoid the plague.

[25 : 25] Pharaoh rejects Moses, hardens his heart, watches his people and his land get devastated. And when it gets really bad, he relents. And he changes his mind.

And then he watches it all happen again. That's the pattern of chapter 7 through 12. In chapter 7, when the Nile River turns to blood, it doesn't turn to be red like blood.

It is blood. And I've already described to you the source of wealth and food from the Nile. You can imagine what that meant to Egypt when the Nile turned to blood.

In verse 23 of chapter 7, Pharaoh turned. He saw it happening. He looked at it. He turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. Just wasn't concerned.

Chapter 8, there's three plagues. There's the frogs. And it says, Pharaoh hardened his heart. There's gnats, or biting insects. Verse 17 says, all the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt.

[26 : 28] But Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Verse 32, in the plot with the flies, Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also and he did not let the people go.

Chapter 9, three more plagues, killing animals. It says, the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he did not let the people go. You have the boils. It says, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Then you have hail. Verse 27 of chapter 9, then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and said to them, I have sinned this time. We have a breakthrough.

God has sent hail into the land, heavy hail that is destroying structures, crops, animals, and people and that gets Pharaoh. And he literally says, I have sinned this time.

The Lord is the righteous one and I and my people are the wicked ones. Make supplication to the Lord for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail and I will let you go and you shall stay no longer.

[27 : 32] That's the seventh plague. There's a reason why it went to 10. Pharaoh wasn't telling the truth. He makes the mistake of believing that confession, saying I have sinned, is the same as repentance.

In that, he demonstrates his understanding that he has sinned and he does need to repent. Did you catch that? There is a consciousness on Pharaoh's part that he is sinning and he needs to repent.

It's a very important point because some people hear this story and they hear the words that the Lord hardened his heart. The Lord hardened his heart. The Lord hardened his heart. Well, Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Also, he had the opportunity to repent. He knew he needed to. He just made, he pretended occasionally to do that. Verse 34 in Exodus 9 says, but when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart.

He and his servants. Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not let the sons of Israel go. And that's why we go to the eighth plague, the locusts. And it says, when the locusts started eating everything, Pharaoh hurriedly calls for Moses and Aaron and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you.

[29 : 01] It worked last time. Let's see if it'll work this time. Now, therefore, please forgive my sin only this once and make supplication to the Lord your God that he would only remove this death from me.

Verse 20, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he did not let the sons of Israel go. Then we're off to the ninth plague, darkness. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he was not willing to let them go.

Then Pharaoh said to him, get away from me. He's done with Moses. He's done with all of this, but he will not bend his knee.

And that's the tenth plague, the prelude to the tenth plague, and that's death. Moses said to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, about midnight, I'm going to out in the midst of Egypt and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.

From the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on the throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstone, all of the firstborn of the cattle as well.

[30 : 11] There's going to be mass death. And there was. It happened. And that is finally when Pharaoh gives.

In Exodus 12, 32, Pharaoh says, take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go and bless me also. You see, Pharaoh is utilitarian.

Get out of here and bless me also. He again demonstrates a recognition of the source of authority and power. He knows he's dealing with a superior power.

And it's God. He wants to negotiate with God. He wants to try to manipulate God. He's taken his entire nation and the people of Israel who have been there through all of this in this epic struggle between a man and God, a man who understands that God is the ultimate authority, but he does not want to bend the knee.

And he's willing to sacrifice his people and his country to try and win. He knows Moses is God, is God, and it's not Pharaoh.

[31 : 21] In Exodus 14, the people have, by the way, been released. They are leaving. And in Exodus 14, verse 8, it says, the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly.

And you know the rest of the story. Moses obeys everything the Lord tells him to do from that point forward. They get to the Red Sea, the water parts, the Israelites cross, the Egyptians jump in there to chase him, and they die.

And that is the last and the end of Pharaoh and his army. And by the way, all of that fulfills that prophecy in Exodus 6 that was so confusing.

He's going to send them out under compulsion, and he's going to force them out under compulsion. It's exactly how the story played out. So we need to kind of pull all this together now and make some observations about leadership, about world events.

But first, I want to compare the stories and the persons of Moses and Pharaoh. The Bible later summarizes these two people's lives this way.

[32 : 41] Moses in Daniel 9 and in Revelation 15 is called a servant of God. In Psalm 90, Psalm 90 is called a prayer of Moses, the man of God.

Psalm 90 is Moses' prayer. Psalm 105, 26 says that God sent Moses, his servant. Hebrews 11, 24 to 29, in that great passage, the hall of fame of faith, the heroes of the faith, Moses is described there.

He, it says, considered the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. He endured as seeing him who is unseen.

High praise of a humble, faithful man. He accomplished God's purposes. Pharaoh, on the other hand, there's 18 references to the hardness of Pharaoh's heart.

He hardened his own heart, it says, and God hardened his heart. Pharaoh's known for having a hardened heart. In the process of all of that, he lies, he manipulates, he fakes his confession, he tries to negotiate with God, he tries to negotiate with Moses, he recognizes the need to repent, he's only going to do it on his terms, he thinks he's on equal or greater footing than the God of Israel, that's the story of Pharaoh.

[34 : 15] And he rejected God from the beginning all the way to the end. And as I said, nobody knows his name. He's just known as the Pharaoh. Romans 9.17, God speaks specifically about Pharaoh.

Why Pharaoh? Why did he exist? Why was he the Pharaoh? Romans 9.17 says, for the scripture says to Pharaoh, for this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.

Pharaoh was a disaster on every level. except Pharaoh accomplished exactly what God had him here to accomplish. Totally.

So, who's your hero, Moses or Pharaoh? They both accomplished God's purposes. They were both murderers. Have you ever thought about that?

You know that Moses was no better than Pharaoh. They both killed other human beings. They were both emotional. They were both arrogant.

[35 : 24] I didn't really, at the beginning, Moses was an arrogant man, especially in that process of killing a man. He was raised in the wealth and power of the Pharaoh and his family and that produced an arrogance which was later broken down.

He provided very weak leadership. He was afraid of his people. He was called to lead his people and so often he joined in their foolishness. He was a weak leader.

He questioned God. He seeks to negotiate with God. I just described Moses and I just described Pharaoh. There's no difference.

They were both appointed by God. I hope you picked up on that. Romans 9 says that specifically about Pharaoh. Exodus says that about Moses. They were both appointed by God.

Knowing all their weaknesses, all their frailties, they were both chosen by God to play their part in an epic struggle. And they both accomplished the purposes of God completely and precisely.

[36 : 35] So what's the difference between Moses and Pharaoh? There's only one difference. Pharaoh refused to submit and repent and he died in his defiance and disobedience.

Moses lived by faith. Pharaoh lived and led by terminal pride. Moses' life and leadership were both deeply flawed.

His faith was hindered by his sin at times but the trajectory and pattern of his leadership and his life was obedience and faith and the love for God and his people and compassion for Pharaoh.

I didn't take the time to show you that. He was so moved by Pharaoh at times that he lost his mind, his good judgment. He was a very compassionate man.

He grew in his boldness and his humility and his faithfulness. Moses grew larger by his leadership as Pharaoh was diminished more and more and more in his leadership.

[37 : 36] the difference is one followed God, one feared God and the other didn't. It's really the only difference. And there's a pattern in the circle of events occurring between God and Pharaoh and Moses, the three main players.

And by the way, they were not the only players. There were a lot of innocents who died along the way. You think of all those families who lost their newborn babies.

You think of all the farmers who lost their crops, lost animals, lost their life savings, all because their leaders were caught in this epic battle of egos.

And the people were the pawns. So to draw this incredible story together, I told you if you wanted to meet me there, I'd get there eventually. Exodus chapter 9, verses 14 through 19.

It's a short but powerful and packed message in the midst of this whole story that contains all the elements of every cycle in the story that's told in Exodus 1 through 14.

[38 : 48] And there's 10 cycles, 10 plagues. It's a clear summary and an explanation of the triangle of leadership. God, Pharaoh, Moses. If you are paying any attention at all to current news, we're watching a world and political leaders as they direct nations either towards prosperity or poverty, relative holiness or abject buying into the darkness of the world and sin and evil, leading their countries into success or failure, war, peace, economic growth, cultural division and destruction.

whatever your perspective that is all going on in every country right now, they're all moving in a direction led by a leader, appointed by God.

And you and I don't always get to know the why as we observe the evil around us succeed and control and lead and get elected and even prosper.

But in this short passage, six verses, we see a comprehensive presentation of foundational truth to keep in mind when hearing the story of Moses and Pharaoh and while we observe the world around us, especially when we think about those who are in positions of significant authority.

And there's seven observations in this passage, but let me read it first. While we make the first observation, there is no one like God. Ephesians, not Ephesians, Exodus 9, verse 14, for this time, I will send all my plagues on you and your servant and your people so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.

[40 : 40] There is no one like God. Verse 15, for if by now I had put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth.

But indeed, for this reason, I have allowed you to remain in order to show you my power and in order to proclaim my name through all the earth.

Still you exalt yourself. Behold, about this time tomorrow, I will send a very heavy hail such as has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

The context here is right before the plague of the hail. But in this paragraph, these words from God is a summary of how God interacts with this world or better said how this world interacts with God.

It's truly remarkable that human beings from their first arrival on this earth in the Garden of Eden have tried to replace God, to lift people and things above God, to reject the concept that he who created us owns us, he makes the rules and it will ever be until Christ returns and redeems his people.

[42 : 01] Leaders, just like Pharaoh and Moses in the beginning, also attempt to place themselves above God and sometimes end up thinking they're negotiating with God. More obviously is a leader who seems to be a leader among leaders and his words and actions influence world events and if he's saving the environment, changing the culture, saving the world from tyranny or some other evil, there's no shortage of people who will put a person like that on a pedestal even if it has to be a little bit higher than God.

And there's no shortage of political pundits and experts who will affirm that opinion. Unfortunately, there's Christians prone to do that too and we have to remember there is no one like God.

No one. Whoever we might put on a pedestal answers to God. They fulfill the purposes of God.

Number two, all authority is given by God. It's laid out in these verses. Verses 15, if by now I had put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth.

All authority comes from God. There is no authority on this earth that can match that authority that you just read in verse 15. And if there was, it would be authority that was given by God.

[43 : 35] Verse 16, the ultimate statement of authority. I have allowed you to remain. That's God. Nobody else can say that. You know, we've had a taste in my country of anti-Christian political, legal, and cultural leadership like we have never seen in my lifetime.

And we're not done with it and there's no reasonable expectation that it won't or shouldn't get a lot worse. It's hard, but inescapable truth that God appoints that leadership for his purposes.

God appoints all authority. All authority lies with God. Psalm 2, 2, the kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against Yahweh and against his anointed saying, let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us.

He who sits in the heavens, the Lord, mocks them. I don't know if you know that about your God, but he mocks people.

And he mocks leadership that thinks that they know better than God. Verse 5 of Psalm 2, then he speaks to them in his anger and terrifies them in his fury saying, but as for me, I've installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain.

[44 : 56] And by the way, that king is Jesus Christ. That's who we love. That's who we answer to. There's nobody like God.

And all authority resides with God. And by the way, he uses it. That's the third point evident in this passage. God is actively involved. You know, it's said of George Washington, the founder of the United States, that he was a Christian.

And when you read George Washington's writings and thinking, he was actually a deist. or that's what everybody believes. Nobody's met him that I know of to ask him.

But he was of the opinion that God created the world and then it's like a clock. You wind it up and you walk away and it just ticks until it's done. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If you think God created the world, put everything in place and walked away, you're missing it. And it's really clear in this passage. He says in this passage, I will send.

[46 : 05] He calls them my plagues. He says, I put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence. God is actively involved in all of this.

He says, I have allowed you to remain. He talks about my power and I will send. In this whole drama with Moses and Pharaoh, God was doing it all.

with his own hand. God is actively involved. I don't know how anybody can read this account and think that God is passive. That it just happens.

He does it all and it's personal. God and Pharaoh one on one. God's action, his purposes, his power, his agenda, his plagues, they're his people, his timing.

There was no passivity in his statements. There was not a series of coincidental natural phenomenon that allowed the locusts to come up out of the sea. God did it and he takes credit for it and he doesn't mask it and he doesn't apologize for it.

[47 : 14] God is actively involved in the affairs of state at all times. like then, current events bear the indelible reminder that God is in control and active in all the events.

He's not an observer. Point number four, God is purposeful and he's not shy about that. And here's maybe the crux of why I wanted to talk to you about this tonight.

What are his purposes? He makes it very clear. Verse 14, so that you may know there was no one like me in all of the earth. There's one purpose.

Why is God personally and directly involved in the affairs of state? Because, verse 14, so that you may know there is no one like me in all the earth.

Verse 16, to show you my power and verse 16, in order to proclaim my name through all the earth. That's why.

[48 : 14] Why? How? We don't always get to know that, do we? When? We don't always get to know that, do we? But we do know why.

These purposes are so definitive and so basic that in our lives today, to the extent we don't know God's purposes, you can always fall back on these three right here.

You know, you've heard when somebody wants to explain why when it comes to God, you should probably discount everything they say after that. Because why and God don't go well together in a sentence.

God's purposes are God's purposes and we don't always get to know that. But here's a pretty good fall back. Whatever's going on and whatever you're asking why about, whatever circumstances causing you to say why is God doing this, you can come to Exodus 9, 14 to 17 and read through here and probably get the answer.

That it's so that you will know that there is no one like God in all the earth. So that you will see the power of God and so that you can proclaim and that he can proclaim his name through all the earth.

[49 : 34] How does he do all that? We don't always know. So God is purposeful and he's not shy. The fifth point is that God is gracious. Here comes the good news.

The grace and patience of God is pervasive in this passage. It sounds like it's really hard and really difficult but there's grace everywhere in this passage and in the story of Pharaoh and Moses.

God could have gone straight to the death plague. You've heard that, right? But he says, I have allowed you to remain. Verse 18, behold, about this time tomorrow.

What's interesting about that statement is God didn't say it's happening right now. He said, at this time tomorrow. Why did he say that? Again, I don't, that's tender ground to walk on to explain the why but maybe it was to give them more time to what?

Repent. Last session, 2 Peter, the patience of the Lord is not licensed to sin. It's opportunity to repent. Opportunity for salvation.

[50 : 43] By this time tomorrow, he says. Verse 19, now therefore send, bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. God is even telling them how to escape the judgment.

There's grace. God is gracious. Opportunity to bend the knee and to save yourself. That's grace. And it's to this end that we are called to pray for our leaders.

That they would repent and be saved and that the patience of God would be used by them not again as license but as opportunity. The Bible commands us to pray for our leaders and we should pray that God would grant them repentance.

Not so that our life would get easier and our world view would be affirmed. and our politics affirmed. But we pray for their salvation so that the Lord's name will be exalted and his name will be known throughout the earth.

And that he would show his power and that the world would know also that there is no one like God. The sixth point in this passage is that the goodness of God is always most clearly seen in contrast with the wickedness of man.

[52 : 04] The flip side of that is that the wickedness of man is most clearly seen in contrast with the holiness of our God. The hopeless corruption of leadership is best seen and understood in contrast with the goodness and the holiness of God.

Pharaoh, a man created by God and appointed by God to his authority presumes to fight God and exalt himself over God. That is the ultimate demonstration of the depravity of man.

And it's easy to point and say, oh, Pharaoh, I can't believe you're that dumb. I can't believe you would do that, Pharaoh. You deserved everything you got because when you do that, you're missing the mirror.

Pharaoh's a picture of all of us. He's an example of all of us. Pharaoh's effort to rationalize and to negotiate with God is a picture of what all of us do outside of the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us and saved us and changes all of that.

there's a cost associated with wicked leadership. You go back and you reread Exodus 1-14 through the eyes of the Israelite people. They were in some sense, as I've said, innocent bystanders of a big drama and there was a heavy cost on them.

[53 : 32] Pharaoh's demonstration of wickedness was at the expense of the people of God and yet God allowed that to continue. This is and ever will be the way it's going to be this side of Eden.

whatever the circumstances, God is good. For the Israelites who were suffering through all of that, God was good.

Why? Because God is good. And the goodness of God is best seen in contrast with the wickedness of men. The seventh observation is that the leader, whoever they are, is not a passive participant.

God is actively involved and leadership is actively involved because we see on 10 occasions, actually 18 recorded, where Pharaoh either hardened his heart or his heart, he rebelled and God hardened his heart.

He defied God actively. Pharaoh was willingly hardened, willingly wicked, willingly evil, willingly ruthless, deceptive, manipulative, and dishonest.

[54 : 47] That's what he wanted to do. Moses was faithful, obedient, submissive, while also occasionally failing as he challenged and questioned God.

Both men were responsible for their own sin. each man was responsible for his obedience and the cost of Moses' leadership was so high, you can imagine the pressures and the grief and the tension and the broken human relationships that he dealt with.

It wasn't easy. But he was doing what God called him to do and at the end of it all the reward was great. Not because of the leadership he offered but because of the goodness and the greatness of God.

and the salvation offered to him through God. Our national leaders are active participants in God's drama and so are you and I.

But it is God's drama. So, quick summary as I wrap up here of action items as we consider all of this. First of all, Christ is king.

[55 : 54] That's not news to you. He appoints leadership. He is far above all leadership. He is the king of kings. He is the lord of lords. He does sit above the circle of the earth.

He did create it all and it all answers to him. God is provident. Whether we view politics, economics, cultural leadership as wicked or sympathetic to Christianity, we don't know.

What we can know is that there is no one like God in all the earth. And he is showing his power every day. And he is proclaiming his name throughout the earth.

That is what God does. And he, leadership matters in a biblical frame through which to evaluate leadership matters. matters.

But in the end of it all, this, everything we're reading about in the paper and current events or we're reading in the Bible of what God says about all of this, it is also that we will know that there is no one like him in all of the earth to show his power and to proclaim his name throughout all the earth.

[57 : 14] Let me pray. Lord, thank you for who you are. Thank you for the encouragement of your word. Lord, we do recognize that we have no control over what happens in this world other than how we live.

Lord, I pray that you would help us regardless of what's in our future as Christians in a world that openly and increasingly rejects Christianity. Lord, build in us deep footings for convictions, based on your word as we lead the church, as we lead our homes.

Lord, may we be a beacon of light in a dark world, not that we would look good, but that your name would be exalted, that your name would be known, that your power would be on display.

And Lord, in all of it, that your kingdom would be advanced here on this earth. And while we pray, Lord, come quickly, we also pray for those who we know who don't know you.

May they use this window as opportunity for repentance and salvation to your praise and to your glory. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.