

Exodus 23 – Lord Tests the Hearts of Pharaoh & Jews

Exodus (Names) – Changing the World

Dr. Leon L. Sanders Exodus 13:17-14

Strategy and Tactics

- The world is at war with God (De 3:15, Ro 8:7, Ja 4:4)
 - God's Strategy – Reveal true nature of every heart (Ex 12:13-14)
 - God's Tactics – Words and deeds that will cause the heart to reveal itself in
 - Thought
 - Word
 - Deed

God Tested Pharaoh & Hebrews

Pharaoh

- Pharaoh's repentance did not change him
- When he heard the Hebrews were lost in the wilderness (*tactics*) he revealed his true nature – sinful (*strategy*)?

Hebrews

- God led the Hebrews in several directions until they *appeared* trapped between natural obstacles.
- Hebrews saw the army of Pharaoh were afraid and blamed God.

Pharaoh Repents of Releasing Hebrews

Pharaoh believed he could rectify his decision and reestablish authority over the Hebrews

God's Tactics - Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh had demonstrated during the Signs that his word could not be trusted
 - He would submit when he could not control
 - He would renege when he believed he could control
- Pharaoh's heart did not change, no repentance
- God's tactics revealed the sinfulness of Pharaoh's heart

Hebrews Weak - Pharaoh Repents

- God "allowed" Pharaoh the *illusion of control* (Hebrews appeared lost, unable to leave the land)
 - Pharaoh gathered his strength to regain the Hebrews
 - His extensive body guard, and some auxiliary units, were quickly gathered to take advantage of the situation
- This is how God "hardened" Pharaoh's heart - the *illusion of control* prompted Pharaoh to attack

Hebrews Accuse God of Unfaithfulness

When trapped, Hebrews "tested" God, accusing Him of wanting their deaths

Hebrews – Equipped, Untrained

- God did not lead the "equipped" Hebrews via the Philistines' country
 - Philistines were descendants of the Greeks who fought at Troy, warfare was their heritage
 - The Egyptians barely defeated them when they were sea raiders
 - Egyptians settled them on their border for protection against invaders from the northeast

Hebrew's God Appears *Weak*

- Everyone could see the
 - Pillar of Cloud (Day)
 - Pillar of Fire (Night)
- Everyone knew God was leading the Hebrews
 - God led south
 - God led north
 - God led into a trap; ergo, a weak God ready for defeat

God's Tactics Revealed His Strategy



- God could have led the Hebrews between the lakes very easily
- Pharaoh "saw" his chance, his heart was revealed
- Hebrews felt betrayed, their hearts were revealed

Hebrews Hate God

Their accusation of God, to Moses, becomes a pattern throughout the Old Testament

Pattern of Accusation

- Hebrews react in fear to an insurmountable threat
- Hebrews accuse (test) God of unfaithfulness
 - God did not provide for, protect, them
 - God led them into their predicament, not their fault
 - They should have stayed in Egypt (world)
 - Being slaves and alive better than being free and dead

Hebrews Right and Wrong

- The Hebrews were right:
 - They had weapons of war but no training in warfare
 - They had little hope of defeating Pharaoh's force
- The Hebrews were wrong:
 - God was leading them, this was His battle
 - Pharaoh had no authority, no power to retake them

Moses' Answer of Faith

- Moses tells the Hebrews only two simple truths
 - The fight belongs to the Lord since they belong to Him
 - Be silent and watch the Lord fight for them
- These truths would be repeated many times in the Pentateuch
 - God would reinforce these truths with judgment as their accusations impugning His righteousness continue

Our Heart's Revealed

God tests us, revealing our sin that we might repent and seek forgiveness in Christ

We Are Not the Hebrews

- God's specific actions in the Pentateuch cannot be directly applied to
 - Church
 - Christians
- God was establishing a theocracy to prepare the nations for the coming Messiah in the future

The Church Not Israel

- Bible nowhere says that God uses His Church (churches) to establish His government on earth
 - This was believed throughout the Medieval and Reformation periods but it was erroneous, and bloody
 - God will establish His theocracy in His Millennial Kingdom after the Church is removed

What Can We Learn

- God's strategy and tactics have not changed
 - World consistently makes the same errors Pharaoh made, revealing their unrepentant sinful hearts
 - Christians consistently makes the same errors as the Hebrews revealing *our* sin in the flesh
 - Christians consistently accuse God of being unfaithful when confronted by insurmountable threats

We Are As They Were

Flesh

- When we feel strong we promote ourselves
- Our works of the flesh demonstrate our sin
- We accuse God to excuse ourselves

Faith

- When we are weak we rest in Christ
- His works of the Spirit guide us through threats
- We confess our sin, repenting in His grace

Christian Maturity - a Process

Time & God's Will



They Will Be As We Will Be

- And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made mature. (Heb 11:39-40 ESV)
- For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the mature comes, the partial will pass away...For now we see in an enigma, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1Co 13:9-10, 12 ESV)