



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Exodus 6: 2-9

“From Egypt to Canaan: A Renewed Commission”

TRANSCRIPT

Returning to Exodus chapter 6, verse 2 through verse 9 for the continuation of our series of studies under the general theme from Egypt to Canaan and tonight exciting fresh uncovering of the divine secret. Verse 2 through verse 9 of chapter 6, and let me read these verses and then we will begin with a brief introduction and deal with some of the questions that arise from these verses. Remember that Moses has had his first encounter with Pharaoh, and Pharaoh has rejected any appeal to let the people of Israel go. He has affirmed he does not know Yahweh. He will not let Israel go and not only that but he has imposed upon them harder burdens than ever before and so consequently the people are inclined to disappointment and discouragement because not only have they not been delivered, but their burdens are heavier than they were before Moses came and spoke with Pharaoh.

And the Lord has encouraged Moses, reminding him that he was going to accomplish his will and in chapter 6, verse 1, the Lord had said to Moses, "Now shall thou see what I will do to Pharaoh for with a strong hand shall he let them go and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." You know, if you were in Moses' place and you were hearing these marvelous promises, and then you were going into Pharaoh and getting negative responses, you can understand why it would be something of a

problem to him and to them. We look at it now with the hindsight of the whole thing accomplished and we can see that God kept his word, but you must remember that Moses had to go through all of the experiences of constant disappointment and discouragement and the people even more so. So, let us bear that in mind as we read these words. Now with verse 2, our study for tonight begins; and God spake unto Moses and said unto him:

"I am the Lord and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah, was I not known to them. And I have also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan', the land of their pilgrimage wherein they were strangers. 'And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage and I have remembered My covenant. Wherefore, I say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord'. (You notice by the way the capital letters in your version or perhaps your version has some other translation but he is saying,) 'I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will rid you out of their bondage and I will redeem you with stretched out arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me for My people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am Yahweh your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land concerning that which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. And I will give it to you for in heritage. I am Yahweh.' And Moses speaks so unto the children of Israel, but they hearken not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage."

Oh, the marvelous immutability of the divine promises. With it, we understood more fully the divine name, Yahweh. That's the clue to the nature of God.

In the New Testament, at the fullness of the Revelation through Christ in the prayer that is given in John chapter 17, the Lord Jesus says, "This is life eternal, that they

might know Thee. The only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." You notice as we are reading through this message that God spoke to Moses in the beginning of verse 2 and concluding at verse 8, that it begins and it ends with a sonorous declaration, "I am Yahweh." Take a look again at verse 2: And God spake unto Moses and said unto him, "I am Yahweh", and then in verse 8 as he concludes the message to Moses he says, "I am Yahweh." So God obviously considers it very important that Moses grasp the fact that he is Yahweh. Now he is not talking about El Shaddai. He said I was known by El Shaddai to the patriarchs but he wants them to understand that he is Yahweh. Now, some people might not find a whole lot of significance in the distinction that exists between El Shaddai, God Almighty, and Yahweh, but it's obvious God regards Yahweh as of considerably greater significance than El Shaddai.

Now, of course, when you say God Almighty, you cannot denigrate that term; that's a great term. That expresses a great aspect of our Lord's being and attributes, but Yahweh expresses even more. And so the fact that he begins his speech with "I am Yahweh" and concludes it with "I am Yahweh." Two words on the Hebrew, *Ehyeh* Malonai. "I Yahweh;" "I Yahweh." Now we supply "am" properly, but three times we have here verse 2, verse 6, verse 8, "I am Yahweh" and then again in verse 7 we have it again, "And you shall know that I am Yahweh, your God." So grounded in his name and its reference to his self-existence for all the words and works of God.

When we study God's being and his attributes and we discuss the fact that he is the divine being who exists. The important first attribute that we always talk about is his self-existence; that he derives his life from himself. Every one of us is a dependent being. He is the only independent being in his universe. In fact, he is the only independent being in any universe. He is the only self-existent being. He derives his life from himself, just as our Lord, second person of the Trinity, derives his life from himself and it is his self-existence that enables him to be immutable. He is utterly independent and when he expresses himself as to do something, since he is totally independent there isn't anything

that can keep him from doing his work. He is an immutable being because he is a self-existent being. So all of his words, all of his works flow out of the fact that he is the self-existent Yahweh.

Now one notices in this passage another important fact that we should not lose, and that is that the same God that the patriarchs worshipped is the God of whom Moses and our Lord is speaking here. In other words Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped the same God because the Lord God says to him that he is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He says in verse 3, "And I appeared unto Abraham, and Isaac, and unto Jacob," and so they worshipped the same God, but we can go further and say that the God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped is the same one that Moses worships. Now they understand different things about God. Moses obviously will understand a great deal more about God, but they worshipped the same God. The patriarchs worshipped the same God. The patriarchs and Moses worshipped the same God.

Now, looking at the message that Moses is given by God, you can see also one other very important thing. God considers his word to be of the greatest significance in delivering his servants from discouragement.

Now when we are discouraged in the 20th Century we say, "Do you know the address and telephone number of a Christian psychologist? Or do you know the address and telephone number of a Christian psychiatrist? Or perhaps I can get an appointment with some pastor teacher, but I would like for you to notice that the thing that God feels that Moses needs and through Moses the people of Israel need is a reflection upon the word that he has spoken to them. Well, of course, they are going through times of discouragement and difficulty because God works slowly, as slow as is required to do his will and to bring us in our character and in our trust to the proper relationship to him. So if we are proud and independent, then he will wait until we become less proud, less

arrogant, more dependent until finally by the circumstances of life he has refined us to the place where we're now ready to receive the sovereign mercies and blessings of our Lord God.

So the more we resist, the more we rebel, the longer the Lord waits to accomplish his purpose. The more quickly we are subservient to the word of God, the more quickly he accomplishes his work. So one can see here how important to God is his work. The people are discouraged. They are having now to find the straw for the bricks. The Egyptians used to give them that. Now they have to go out and do it and furthermore, they have to produce the same number of bricks. So it's tough. And what's made it even tougher is Moses keeps telling them about these promises of deliverance and then, not only have they not been delivered, but they are worse off than they were before. And so what will they need? Reflection on the word of God. Reflection on the immutable sovereign God who has made certain unconditional promises to them.

Now Moses is going to be given some fresh revelations. These often happen, that is the Lord is not going to go over simply the things of the past. He is going to do that. That's going to be the burden of what he says, but he is also going to introduce Moses and the children of Israel into further understanding of his being and attributes. That's what's meant when he says, "I am Yahweh, and I appeared unto Abraham, and Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them." So he is going to give them a fresh revelation of the name of God, Yahweh, in order that there may be a new advance in their experience of the Lord God.

So, you'll notice as you read through the Bible that this is his method. He begins by unfolding certain aspects of himself, the Creator. Then he unfolds the aspect of his being as El Shaddai, God Almighty. That's how Abraham understood him, God Almighty. Now Moses and the children of Israel will learn that he is Yahweh and as the Old Testament unfolds and the works of God unfold, they will learn further significance to the name Yahweh, "I AM who I AM." And finally the Lord Jesus Christ will come and we will read in the prologue of John's Gospel, 'No man has seen God at anytime. The only

begotten Son who is in the bosom of the father, he has exegated him. And so the fullness of revelation will come with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now first of all then, there is to be a fresh revelation from the commissioner, that is Moses, his commissioner, the Lord God to the prophet, "I am Yahweh." I think we need to stop over this for just another moment, "I am Yahweh." This expresses, in a sense, Jehovah's obligation to himself. The Lord has certain obligations to himself. What does that mean? Or what is meant by that is that he must do certain things in order that his name be manifested to men in its true significance.

You know, through the Bible you will find the Lord God saying things like this: "You have been a reproach to my name. You are of my people but you have sinned against me. And you have caused my name to be blasphemed among the heathen. And so he will say because I will not permit my name to be blasphemed among the heathen. I will do certain things." He has an obligation to himself. You can find it in a lot of passages. One of the passages that I think it appears in so significantly is Ezekiel 20, and I am going to read these verses to you, and beginning of the fifth verse and listen because Ezekiel is reflecting upon some of the things that are found in this passage.

And say unto them, Thus sayeth the Lord God: "In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up my hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, I am Yahweh your God; in the day that I lifted up my hand unto them to bring them forth of the land of Egypt and to a land that I respite for them flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am Yahweh your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be

polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

Now, I am not going to read further but I just want you to notice verse 14. "But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. And in verse 22 we read: "Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. And finally, in verse 44 for the fourth time in this one chapter, we read: "And ye shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O Ye house of Israel," sayeth the Lord God.

His deliverances are not due to our merit. It's obvious when he delivers the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, it's not because they are good, it's not because they are members of the right church. It's for his name's sake. And when they sinned against him, his name is reproached and he will do something about that to, and what he does about that often is to judge. These are very serious things because if you just reflect for a moment, you professing Christians who are sitting in this auditorium tonight, you say you belong to the Lord. You say the name of God is something that you appreciate and you are identified with him. Are you a reproach to his name?

Now he will carry out his promises but often it's necessary for him to discipline in order that you would not be a reproach to his name. And so, he will carry out his promises of grace or in judgment, discipline for believers as the case may be. This is a very serious matter. I could not help as I was thinking over this in my study of reflecting upon it. It seemed to be borne in upon me so much that I had to stop and put my Bible down and ask God to not allow me to be a reproach to his name. Because we expose ourselves to discipline and discipline is no fun. Ask the children of Israel for four hundred years in the land of Egypt. So with the Christians, he cannot abandon us

because he has made certain in invaluable unconditional promises to us. But he can surely discipline his children, and he does.

So, he said, "Moses, I am Yahweh." That is a revelation of who he is in his word. In that very word I am Yahweh. Yahweh, remember, means "He is." Or perhaps He causes to be, but it is the self-existent God. Now notice the revelation of action in verse 3. "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them." What an intriguing text this is.

Now if you would go back and read the earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis and you will find the word Yahweh there. You have noticed that, haven't you? Didn't you read the term Yahweh in Genesis? Yes you did. But now God says, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh was I not know to them? What an intriguing text there or, put in another way, what a puzzling text? Because when you read Genesis, there is Yahweh. No question about El Shaddai. He did manifest himself unto Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai just before he confirmed the covenant with Abraham. He announced He was El Shaddai. "El" means God in the sense of the strong one, the mighty one. "Shaddai", no scholar has come up with a convincing significance for Shaddai.

The older commentators and older orthodox men liked to link it with the word that referred to sufficiency, "Dai" and "Shaddai" was related to sufficiency, and thus it came to be the God who is sufficient. In fact, some have even linked it with a woman's breast as that upon which an infant receives his sufficiency of life and so, God has been spoken of in some ancient commentators as the breasted one, that is the all sufficient one. That identification has largely been abandoned. It's evidently not true. There is a Hebrew word *shadad* that means "to destroy," and it has the sense of almightiness, and many of the commentators have thought that that's was what is meant and God Almighty

then would be a very correct rendering of it very close to its meaning. Still others have recently found in it an old Mesopotamian divine title and it too would, being built upon the root for the word mountain, would support the idea of sufficiency and stability, and it may well be that because remember Abraham came from Mesopotamia and it's possible that there is some connection to El Shaddai and the Almighty God. So we'll accept the idea that this is a reference to God Almighty and that Abraham had revealed to him God in that sense. He is the Almighty God.

But now something more has been made of this than that because what has been made of this is that we have here a clear statement that the name of Yahweh was not known to the patriarchs. But yet when you read the literature about the patriarchs, there is the name Yahweh. So, as a result of this, there has arisen in the studies of the Old Testament evolutionary, documentary theory. And that is that what our author here is relying upon us as one strand of tradition in which it is stated that the early patriarchs did not know about Yahweh.

But then in another tradition represented in the Book of Genesis, the author of that tradition says that the ancients did know about Yahweh and so there have arisen some very interesting theories. One, the JDEP theory or JEDP theory and which are various on the basis largely not entirely of the names of God, certain strands are identified as separate traditions, often contradictory. And generally speaking, men who originated such theories were believers in the doctrine of evolution. And so, combining that with evolutionary theory in the scientific world, they said that what we have in the Bible is an evolutionary development of biblical doctrine, and one can see it in things like this. And so, we are to think of Israel as being gradually developing out of its pagan backgrounds into the full-fledged theism that later developed, becoming purer and purer as the time went on.

Now, if you look at the history of Israel in the Old Testament, you will see that the Israelites were not people who had a genius for religion and were bent on finding God.

As a matter of fact, they have a genius for apostasy and are bent on backsliding from God. So that if you look at the Old Testament from the standpoint of evolutionary theory, you have pure beginnings and then apostasy, just the opposite. And so now finally, some of these types of approaches to the Old Testament are being abandoned, but still we have a problem, do we not? It says that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob didn’t know about Yahweh, doesn’t it? And yet we read in the Book of Genesis that Yahweh is a term, a name that they knew about; and so what do we have but contradiction? For now God says in Exodus that he is going to make himself known as Yahweh. So there is a puzzling text. I find it puzzling. I imagine you do too. But one answer is to simply say the writer of the book of Genesis is speaking anachronistically, always like to leave you with one nice word. Now what that means, very simply, is he speaks proleptically. That helps you doesn’t it? Well, let me explain. Sometimes one word will do the duty for a half dozen sentences, but unfortunately the word is not too plain and clear. Have you ever read instructions about how to work your computer? Theologians are not only ones who have scientifically difficult to understand words. So anyway, what he means is simply that Moses is using a later term in describing what happened in the Book in Genesis because it’s the same God.

And so the term that came and used later on is used before the time that it came to be known. That’s contrary to time, the development of time, so we say anachronistically. That’s one possible explanation. You can say that they really didn’t know the significance of the term Yahweh, but they were speaking of God and, later on, God is known as Yahweh so why can you not say Yahweh? We now know it is Yahweh. Just as for example, I might say to you instead of the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, I might say the Lord Jesus appeared to Samson. The Lord Jesus appeared to Gideon because I know by theology that the Lord is the angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament and many of those passages.

That's one possible explanation but in Genesis 4 verse 26, it says, "At a certain time then men began to call upon the name of Yahweh. In chapter 4 in verse 26, we read, "And to Seth, to him also was born a son and he called his name Enos, then began men to call upon the name of Yahweh." That seems strange. Now, it so happens to call upon the name of Yahweh as a general term for prayer. You can find it in the book of the Psalms. So it may well be that they were simply speaking anachronistically.

I would like to suggest to you that it's something else. It's going to require me to slightly re-translate Genesis chapter 6 in verse 3, but I assure it's perfectly harmonious with accepted principles of Hebrew grammar. Let me just recognize a couple of things and I am not going to explain the technicalities of it for those of you who can to read Hebrew; there are two or three in the audience, it involves a correct rendering of Nifal stem which is usually reflexive rather than passive, but it can be passive. Sometimes it can only be reflexive. But this is the way I am going to translate it. Keep your eye on your text itself and notice the differences. And God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am Yahweh, and I showed myself to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob in the character of the El Shaddai." But in the character expressed by my name "Yahweh," I did not make myself known to them. Let me read it again, "In the character of El Shaddai, I showed myself to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob. But in the character expressed by name Yahweh, I did not make myself known to them." In other words, it is the character expressed by the name that was withheld from the patriarchs. They knew the name and they were introduced to the terminology, but they did not understand the full character that is hidden behind the name Yahweh. He is. He causes to be.

Now there is a little passage in Exodus chapter 33. I am sorry I am taking a little longer, but this is a very important little verse and I hope that you will get the point of it. And if I have to refer to it again next week, well, what's going to be lost by that? Exodus chapter 33 and verse 12: And Moses said unto the Lord, "See Thou sayeth unto me, bring up this people, and Thou has not let me know who Thou wilt send with me. Yet thou

had sayeth I know thee by name and thou has also found grace in my sight." Now, what is meant when it is said that God knows Moses by name? Does that mean that somebody has finally informed God that when you say Moses or Mosheh, that refers to that fellow who is the brother of Aaron. Is that what is meant when it says, "Yet thou has sayeth I know thee by name." He's finally made the identification between the sound Mosheh and this person who is the brother of Aaron? Well, of course, not. He is talking about how God knows the character of Moses.

Look at verse 17, "And the Lord said unto Moses I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken for thou hast found grace in my sight and I know thee by name." I finally figured it out who you are Moses; your name is Mosheh and Mosheh is the guy who went out into the desert and has now come back and I see. When they say Mosheh, they are referring to him. I know him by name now. So that's was what he is talking about. When he talks about knowing him by name, the name was signified all that a person was in his character. He is referring to the fact that he really knows Moses through and through in his character. That's what is meant by that. It is all the difference in the world between knowing a person's name, his *moniker*, and knowing that person, all the difference in the world.

I knew the name Donald Grey Barnhouse before I heard him preach. And then I heard him preach, and I came by the grace of God to give myself to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. Then I got to know Dr. Barnhouse personally and through the years I got to know him better and better. So to know the name of a person is all together different from knowing the name in the biblical sense; the character of the person. Now, before I married Martha; I knew her name too. I know her a little better now. Sometimes when you get to know a person beyond knowing their name, it can be disappointing. I am sorry Martha. And of course, I refer to your knowledge of me. So, to know a person's name is to know their inmost character.

Now that's what the Lord is talking about here when He says, “I appeared unto Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob; that is, I showed myself to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob in the character of El Shaddai. They saw me as the Almighty God. But in the character expressed by my name Yahweh, I did not make myself known to them. But I am going to do it to you now.” And what are we going to see in the Book of Exodus? We are going to see the children of Israel by redemption brought out from Egypt brought through the Red Sea, brought on in deliverance from Pharaoh and his hosts into the land and by this we will come to know the character of God as a gracious, mighty, and just God at the same time. Listen to his promises, “For this is the ground of this fresh revelation: Covenant, love and promises.”

Look at verse 4 and following, he says, “And I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage wherein they were strangers and I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage.” You can see his love there, “And I have remembered my covenant.”

Now listen, remember does not mean that he had forgotten. We say that all the time. I remembered you had forgotten. But when God says, he remembers that is an emotional term that refers to his actions. So, when he remembers his covenant, he means he has not forgotten it, but he is going to carry out his principles and his promises. So he expresses the immutability of the covenant. He expresses the love that he has for the people of Israel and now notice the seven-fold enumeration of the covenantal promises: Seven "I wills." This is unconditional blessing on the part of God. And notice that he does not even say if, if, if I will. It is I will. I will. I will. I will. I am going to do my will. Look at them. Verse 6: “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will rid you out of their bondage.” I'd say where that means to deliver. "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." He is going to play the part of the kinsman redeemer. Marvelous picture. We'll later talk about that, perhaps.

One thinks of Boaz and Ruth and Leviticus 25, and then he says in verse 7, “And I will take you to me for a people,” and in verse 7, “You shall know that I am the Lord your God – and oh, I will be to you, a God,” that's number 5. Incidentally, these two things: “I will take you to me for a people”, “I will be to you for a God,” -- These are the fundamental covenantal promises. God is going to be our God; we are going to be his people. That's the relationship that he establishes. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in this covenantal relationship. He is your God. You are one of his people.

Now that means he has an obligation to his name so far as you are concerned. He will not allow you to be the kind of reproach to his name that will cause people to slander his name and if you persist in the kind of action that causes people to slander his name, he will do a little something about it like a good father, and that is called chastisement, discipline, spiritual spanking. He is well able to do it. Isn't it nice to have a father like that? How bad it would be if we did have a father like that? How terrible it is to have a father who doesn't discipline a child. God disciplines his children. These are real fundamental realities of life. He carries out his word. That's five of them.

Actually, that's the essential meaning of the entire Book of Genesis, and then he finishes with two more, verse 8: “I will bring you in unto the land,” and verse 8, “I will give it to you for a heritage,” and then he says, “I'm Yahweh.” That's his obligation. That's what he is bound by his name to do. Why? Because he is immutable, he is completely faithful to his word and he will carry it out and if he says he is going to give us eternal life through Christ and if he says he is going to bring us into conformity to Christ, if says he is going to guide our steps so that we will ultimately be made like him, he will do it. "I am Yahweh." I am the faithful covenant-keeping God.

Now nothing seemed more unlikely at the moment. Moses is flailing away with the words of God and the children of Israel are saying, “We find it worse than when you began. Moses we're sorry you came down and you've made it worse for us and as for all

these promises, they're just words. They don't have any significance to us.” So God says to Moses, “Look, I will let the fathers, the patriarchs know that I was the El Shaddai, Almighty God, but now you are going to really know my name and you’ll find that I am faithful to my word, that I am a God of redemption and grace. I will bring you in a miraculous mighty work of divine redemption out of Egypt and into the land delivered from the hand of satanic Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

And thus you will learn something about me. You will learn my grace and you will also learn my judgment because every time you look at the Red Sea you'll say "There's Pharaoh and all his hosts." Well, the response is what you expect at this stage and Moses spake so unto the children of Israel, but hearken not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage. The prophets submissive, they are not encouraged by these glorious words. They are an impatient people discouraged by heavy labor and unfulfilled promises. There is a little proverb that we often cite, once bitten, twice shy. This is going to be all even more difficult and even when they got out on the land, they will still be complaining. That's the way we are in the flesh. May God help us to realize that he is serious about doing his will and keeping his word, “I am Yahweh.” Let us bow in a word of prayer.

[Laughter] Father, we are grateful for these magnificent sections that Moses has giving to us which detail some of the progress that he and the children of Israel made in their spiritual lives written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come, oh God may we never bring reproach upon Thy name. May Believers Chapel not bring reproach upon the name of our God. Lord, may we be submissive.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.