

You Are a Husband of Blood

Exodus 4:24-31, "And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision. And the Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped."

Let's pray. Dear heavenly Father dear God, we thank You for these words. We thank You for being a faithful God who punishes for our sins and chastises us, who says I won't let this go any further, who brings things to a head. We thank You dear Lord for being faithful with us. We thank You dear God for giving us the words to say. We thank You for giving those with us to go with us when we go to speak. We thank You dear Lord for bringing us to a point of worship. I pray dear Lord that we would learn from this passage, that we would see that You do all these things, that we would not place too much stock in our moments of worship and these momentary things, that we would understand true faith is an ongoing thing, it's a perpetuation of faith, a perpetuation of worship. That we would not look at isolated things and make decisions from them. I pray that You would help us dear God to see Your hand in all things, that we would see Your chastisement, that we would see Your words, that we would see our response and see that we live and move in You and that You are the One who controls all things. Amen.

As we continue to consider the return of Moses to Egypt, we come to this difficult passage where Moses' wife circumcised their son and casts the foreskin at the feet of Moses. I'm trying to figure out what this meant and what we are supposed to take away from it. I think it's useful to go back to what I talked about last week about putting in context the life of Jacob and Moses because so much of it is parallel. Last week in introducing the sermon I talked about just how much the lives of Jacob and Moses were the same. They both fled to avoid being killed, they were both commanded by God to go back, they both got a wife while in exile, they had children. There were so many things that were in parallel, including that they were both going back to meet with their brothers, Esau and Aaron. But now we come to this passage that there is such a clear parallel to me in Genesis 22 that Noel read, both of them are headed back to gather a people. This is when Jacob establishes his household, he goes back and this is how you get the people of God, is that Jacob separates himself from Laban's household. This is how you get Moses going and gathering a people together and he leads them out of Egypt and they become

a separate people, the people of God, a separate nation. So what they are headed back to do, there are clear parallels, but in their way to meet their respective brothers they both struggle with God. It talks about Jacob wrestling with God and it talks about Moses being sought by God to kill him or that God is seeking to kill him. In this passage we see that God seeks to kill Moses and that God did not let Moses go until Zipporah had circumcised their son just like Jacob wrestles with God, he's not let go until God touches him on the hip and he leaves and limps from then on. So why are these parallels and why do they matter? I think it comes down to the fact that they are both a type of Christ. Jacob is a type of Christ, Israel is a name for Christ, that's explicit in Scripture in Isaiah 49:1-3, "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The Lord has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me." "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.'" Israel was a name for Jesus Christ so when God says in Genesis 32:28, "And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.'" He's called Israel because he wrestled with God and prevailed, because he prevailed with men. When did Jesus Christ wrestle with God and prevail? When did Jesus Christ wrestle with man and prevail? Obviously it's at the Garden of Gethsemane and when He's wrestling with Pilate and Herod and the crucifixion, and He prevailed at the resurrection. I think that's what it's a picture of, with Jacob it's a picture of Christ wrestling to gather a people together to deliver a people. This picture here is God seeking to kill Moses because Moses is returning to gather a people to deliver them to serve God. It shadows the resurrection. It's important to remember that Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear." Moses is a type of Christ as well, both of these are foreshadowing what Christ is going to do and both cases they go to gather people and God meets them on the way and fights with them. The same thing that He does with Christ as the Garden of Gethsemane. That's the best explanation that I can come up with. There are so many pictures here, Jacob walks away changed, he walks away with this limp. The Israelites would not eat that part of an animal ever again, I don't think he just limped for an hour or two, I think he limped for the rest of his life because everyone understood this was caused because he wrestled with God. When Jacob wrestled with God he was changed, just like Christ wrestles with God, He dies and is resurrected and He has a new body, He's changed. Moses has the bloody foreskin cast at his feet. I think that's the same picture as the covenant that's the picture of the shedding of blood. All these things about the bloody foreskin, this is about covenant. Again, I think it's the picture of the meeting of the Son of God and God the Father at Gethsemane. Luke 22:41-44, "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.'" Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." This is the picture that I think we see here, the picture where the wrestling with God is so great that it's the picture of God seeking to kill Moses. Again, Israel goes on and builds a stone palace after building the house of his father-in-law, and after the resurrection is when Christ builds His house instead of His Father's house. When He is resurrected He goes to the Father to receive His kingdom. In a

similar way Moses goes and gathers a people together that will be freed from slavery in Egypt and we are freed from our slavery to sin by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Christ said in John 12:31-32, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." Both of them it's this picture of drawing a people out so I could be wrong, and I'm certainly interested in other opinions, but this is how I'm going to interpret these verses because this is the only thing that makes sense to me right now.

Verses 24-26, "And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision." They left Midian and headed to Egypt, probably specifically Goshen which is in the northern part of the Suez Gulf and this is where Africa transitions to the Middle East by the Sinai Peninsula. As they are headed on the way Moses is now walking in obedience. God told him to go and he is going to free his people after he pushed back and after he resisted God, now he is submitting. "At the encampment." That word translated 'encampment' in the KJV is 'inn', but what the word really means is stopping place. So this is where they stopped for the night, this is what we know. We don't know whether he was camping out or if there was an inn where they were. What we know is this happens where they stopped for the night, just like it happened at night for Jacob, just like it happened for night at Christ. This is the same thing, this is their stopping place for the night. "That the Lord met him and sought to kill him." So the Lord visits Moses, He comes somehow into his presence and when Moses stops for the night the Lord met him there with the intention to kill him. Obviously, just like with Jacob, if God wanted to beat Jacob He could have. It's not like Jacob can actually wrestle with God and win. It's like wrestling a two-year-old, the two-year-old can't win even though they think they can pin their father. They didn't actually win, their father let them win. It's the same with God, if God sought to kill Moses, Moses would have been dead. All God has to do is say one word. This is from Moses' perspective and from his perspective God is seeking to kill him. The point can't be that God was trying to kill Moses because God kills and God makes alive, there's nothing man can do to prevent it. So Moses thought God was trying to kill him and obviously God was putting Moses in the situation where he felt like God was trying to kill him. If you remember how last week's passage ended, it seems to me that God is testifying to Moses the seriousness of the matter. When Moses is being told to relay a message from God to Pharaoh, Exodus 4:23, "So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn." God was telling Moses, 'Go tell Pharaoh to take God seriously' and here Moses is not serving God seriously. He knows about circumcision. God's saying take Me seriously that 'Let My son go or I will kill your firstborn son', but Moses is not obeying God in the way that all the offspring of Abraham serve Him. Moses was not fulfilling the only ceremonial law that existed at that point in time and Moses failed to do it. How could he go into Egypt and tell Pharaoh to be serious because God was going to kill his firstborn son if you don't let His firstborn son go to serve Him if Moses wasn't serious about serving God. It makes sense why God would meet him on the way and seek to kill him. This was established in Genesis 17:10-22, "This is My covenant which

you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.” This was the ceremonial law that was given to Moses and Moses is going to be the giver of the ceremonial law, all the laws about the feast and the sacrifices and here he is given one and he’s not obeying it. This would be the equivalent now of a nationally known leader fervently preaching orthodox Christianity, but refuses to be baptized. We wouldn’t accept it, we shouldn’t expect God to accept Moses being in the position God was putting him in and letting him have such open and obvious sin, he hadn’t circumcised his son. He isn’t taking things as seriously as he should. But then his wife, not Moses, responds. That could be because he is so busy trying not to die because God is seeking to kill him that he doesn’t have the opportunity, but it’s his wife. Remember his wife was the daughter of a priest in Midian. The Midianites were also supposed to be circumcising as a sign of the faith of Abraham. The Midianites, the Ishmaelites, the Israelites, they are all supposed to be circumcising and some of them probably kept the practice of circumcision, especially those faithful to Abraham’s God. We know that the Israelites frequently didn’t circumcise, but some did. It’s clear here that Zipporah knew the responsibility and perceived this is why God was angry with Moses. Understand when God is angry with you, it’s not arbitrary, it’s not unknowable the reason why. When we are being chastised we can know why, we can cry out to God and God will tell us why. He’s not chastening us out of vengeance, He chastens His children so they repent and to repent you need to understand what your sin is. So we shouldn’t be surprised when Zipporah knew what the issue was, we should say this is normative, this is what God does, He tells us what the issues are. So Zipporah knew about circumcision, she knew this is why God was seeking to kill her husband. “Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son.” With probably something like flint that has a sharp end. When the Israelites go into the Promised Land and they take a sharp stone and the men are circumcised when they stand before Jericho because they did not circumcise in the wilderness. So she performs a circumcision on her son. I think it’s pretty significant that it’s on her son and not her sons. If he had failed to circumcise

both of his sons you would think that God wouldn't be satisfied until the sons were circumcised. I think it's far more likely that he had already circumcised his older son so there was only one son that was uncircumcised so Zipporah only circumcised her younger son. Zipporah seems to be familiar enough with the procedure enough that she does it. We should always just be warned by these things, it's easy to let things go, to start things well with the first child and the excitement that comes with the first child. How many parents take more pictures of the first child than they did with the second and the third and the fourth? This is natural and this is normal, but at the same time, the fulfillment of the Scriptural commandments, you have the same responsibility to proclaim the gospel to your tenth child as you do to the first child. You have the same responsibilities for the things that are important, not just the things you have more time for when they are younger, like taking pictures or when you have fewer children. The things that are important, those things have to be fulfilled regardless of how many children you have. I think it's also important as we consider this passage, to remember the act of circumcision is the act of being part of a covenant. Yes it's a picture of the suppression of lust, but the sign was given to Abraham as a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham. It's not just a sign of the Abrahamic covenant, it's also the sign of the Mosaic covenant. As God gives additional ceremonial laws to Moses for the Israelites that are specific to the Israelites and not just to the sons of Abraham, which the Midianites would include, but the ones that are specific to the Israelites, to partake in them and go up to the feast you had to be circumcised. So the circumcision is also a sign of entering into the Mosaic covenant and not just the Abrahamic covenant. The stranger that wants to enter into the Mosaic covenant, the sign that he enters into the Mosaic covenant is to be circumcised. So as we think of signs of covenant and the sign being thrown at his feet, that's what is happening here. "And cast it at Moses' feet." The foreskin that was cut with the sharp stone, she threw at Moses' feet "and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" She casts the sign of the covenant there and declares that Moses is a husband of blood. There was shedding of blood which is what's required to establish a covenant. Hebrews 9:17-18, "For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood." I think when you see her cast the foreskin at Moses' feet it's a picture of the bloody covenant, which is of course the picture of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It's by the shedding of His blood that we are saved. It's by the shedding of blood that the new covenant is established so all these pictures, I think this is just foreshadowing what is required of Christ because what's required for Christ is His blood to be shed. Here we see the picture of testifying to the covenant that Moses was part of, testified to with the shedding of his son's blood, and obviously not to the point of death, but the Abrahamic covenant wasn't established by people dying either, it was established by circumcision and the shedding of blood from circumcision. There are other parallels to the crucifixion as well. It appears that Zipporah is angry with him. Gill doesn't think that's the right reading, but it seems like the natural reading to me. The Jews, who were the bride of Christ, for Christ to divorce the northern kingdom Israel, but He was still married to Judah as it says in Jeremiah 3:8, "Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also." When Jesus Christ is being crucified, His wife is angry and shedding blood with Him, that is exactly the same thing that happens when they stand before the trial at Caiphas and the trial

with Ananias and the trial with Pilate. They are calling, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' This is the bride of Christ that is speaking this, not the true bride of Christ, but the type of the bride of Christ, the nation of Israel. I think you see the same picture here, the anger of Zipporah parallels the anger of Israel, the anger of the Jews. After the circumcision God lets Him go, but that picture of God letting Moses go, God was using Moses and seeking to kill him and I think it's because of the importance of this picture. Again, I might have it wrong, but we should recognize the importance of the pictures in the Old Testament. God causes physical reality to become parables to point to Scriptural truths that we can understand them so we can rightly see. Next week as we start Hebrews by reading through the book, it has many explanations about why things happened the way that they did so we can understand the gospel, but it also says there are things that aren't explained yet that we're still supposed to be able to understand. Like in describing the tabernacle, it says in Hebrews 9:1-5, "Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail." He says all these things and he's saying all these things are pointing to other things, they mean other things and then he says we can't speak these things in detail. Not meaning that the writer couldn't understand them, but meaning that God wasn't writing the explanation for us, Hebrew was supposed to be a certain length and that's the length that it was. The information is there for us to understand. When we look at these passages and look at the passages of 'you're a bloody husband to me', we're supposed to figure out what it means and not be satisfied by saying there are mysteries in the Word of God. Instead we're supposed to wrestle with God, we're supposed to try to understand. The implication is not that these things cannot be understood, but that we have the responsibility to understand them and not just the things in the New Testament that God has clearly said this is what it means, but all things in the Scripture were given to us and they are profitable to us so we can be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We are supposed to wrestle with God's Word and cry out for wisdom to understand why God would seek to kill Moses, why would God cause Zipporah to throw the foreskin at his feet and say, 'You are a bloody husband'? My explanation might not be the correct one but we are supposed to try to figure out what the explanation is because in doing that we understand God better. After He let him go she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision." She repeats that he is a husband of blood. Again, a husband is a covenant in a relationship just like the circumcision pointed to the covenant. It's possible here that she's not saying it with the anger now that the risk to her husband's life is past. Like many of the Jews believed after Christ's resurrection that He was indeed their husband and that He was their husband through the shedding of His blood because it's only by Christ being our husband of blood that we have eternal life. It's through His blood that we can have forgiveness of sins. Again, I think this is pointing to an aspect of the New Covenant. The things that we are supposed to see, things that were examples that they couldn't understand but that we are supposed to see and understand. Especially because the reason that she said he was a husband of blood was because of the circumcision. Another thing to note is that this is

how Israel, through the Mosaic covenant, how Israel was always to approach their husband. Until the establishment of the New Covenant, they were always to approach their God through the shedding of blood. He was indeed a bloody husband to them. Whenever they were going to enter in they had to kill an animal, whenever they confessed a sin they had to kill an animal. There was so much outpouring of blood that indeed Christ was a bloody husband to the nation of Israel. We don't do the same thing in one sense, but in another sense we do exactly the same thing because every week as we come to the Lord's Supper we say this is the New Covenant which was established through the blood of Jesus Christ and we declare that Jesus Christ is indeed a husband of blood of us because it's only by His blood being shed that we can be saved. We don't come with imperfect blood like they did so they had to keep killing bulls and goats and sheep, they had to keep killing all these animals. We don't come that way, but we still come to Jesus Christ, we still come to worship Him as His bride through His blood which we declare at the Lord's Supper when we say the cup is the cup of the blood of Christ. He is still our husband of blood.

Verses 27-28, "And the Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him." Now we find out that the Lord has spoken to Aaron. Verse 14 of this chapter, "So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart." God had already told Moses, and we know God cannot lie, so we know Aaron was already going out to meet Moses. I think we are taking a slight step backwards in time, that God had already told Moses to leave and go out into the wilderness. Because he meets Moses at a very specific place, it's not likely that God told him to wander around until he met Moses, but He directs him very specifically where he should go, to the mountain of God. Assuming, which is probably correct, that the mountain of God was on the Sinai Peninsula then this would be closer to Aaron than it would be Moses. Either way they were moving quickly to get there because Moses had to return to Jethro, leave Jethro, and come so Moses isn't hesitating at this point, he is moving quickly to meet Aaron there. So either Aaron was moving slowly or Aaron took some time before he left, but it seems likely that between God telling Moses that he needed to go to Egypt and he went to ask for Jethro's permission, it had to be quick. It wasn't like Jacob who asked to leave, but it ended up being six years later. In Moses' case, it seems he moved faster than Aaron. "So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him." The two met on the mountain of God. Remember this is where the burning bush was, this is where the Ten Commandments will be given later and Aaron will make the golden calf. This is where they meet one another and obviously it's a big country, it's obviously the point God told them to meet each other. Aaron's response was to kiss Moses. It doesn't seem likely that Moses thought his brother would be against him like Esau when he got a troop of four hundred men to go meet Jacob when Jacob returned. Moses has every reason to believe that Aaron is coming as a friend, not coming as someone who is trying to kill him. Moses had been gone for forty years and when he was in Egypt he was in the house of Pharaoh's daughter not in the house with Aaron, so there could be resentment. He was the younger brother that was greater than the

older brother, there could be a lot of things going on, but Aaron's response was to kiss him, to show a sign of affection. The word for 'kiss' is 'to touch' or 'bring near'. "So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him." Moses, who was not a man of words tells Aaron all the words of God, what they are supposed to do together, including that Aaron was to be Moses' prophet. Moses was to be like God to Aaron, Moses had to train Aaron in the things that he was supposed to say and inform him of the words he was going to say on Moses' behalf. Granted, Aaron had an inclination to believe him because God had spoken to him to meet his brother there. Moses is able to persuade Aaron without doing any of the signs is the way that it reads. So Moses said he couldn't persuade the elders of Israel without the signs, but then he persuades Aaron without the signs. He could have easily persuaded the elders of Israel if that was His will. God can prepare the way. Moses was just making excuses why not to go. He was plenty eloquent to be able to explain to Aaron, he could have explained to the elders of Israel. They could have believed just like He prepared Aaron to believe. Again, the way it reads is that he told him about the signs, but he didn't do the signs for Aaron. He told him about the signs he was going to do for the elders of Israel. Then Aaron acted out of belief that what Moses said was true. The text doesn't read that Aaron required the signs, he believed and acted out of the faith he had in Moses even though he was the one that would actually be speaking to the elders of Israel, he would be the one putting his reputation on the line so to speak. He still, by faith, believed that what Moses said was true, that he would be able to show these signs.

Verses 29-31, "Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped." So Moses and Aaron go and return to Egypt, again probably to the land of Goshen. This is where the Israelites settled when they came with Jacob, the land of Goshen is just right to the northeast of the Suez Gulf which is what separates Egypt from the Sinai Peninsula. Goshen was also where one of the treasured cities was built, Ramses, because he enslaved the Israelites, so it's easy to believe that's where the Israelites primarily were even though it's 215 years or so after Jacob went there. So they "gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel." Just as God had told Moses what they should do, and as I said before, these were probably not elected elders because they were slaves, but these were the people that the Israelites would listen to because of their experience and wisdom, these were the respected people in Israel so they would make their case to them and the other people would believe because they would trust the elders of Israel. "And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses." Remember this was the role that Aaron was given. Moses was supposed to be like God to Aaron and Aaron was supposed to be his prophet. This is what we're supposed to do, as prophets of God we're supposed to speak the words that the Lord gives us. This is what it means to be a faithful servant, this is what it means to be a prophet, and this is what Aaron was doing for Moses. Moses said this is what you are supposed to say and he went and did it. This is a picture of what Christ did. It says in John 12:50, "And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so

I speak.” This is what Christ does, He’s a prophet of God the Father so He speaks the words that God the Father says. It’s a picture of what the Holy Spirit does in John 16:13, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” This is what prophets are to do. We want to make prophets about foretelling. There’s never any evidence that Aaron foretells anything about what Moses is going to do, but Aaron is a prophet because he tells the words that Moses gave him to speak. Christ was a prophet, not because He foretold what was going to happen at the end of time, but because He said the words that He gave Him to speak. The Holy Spirit is a prophet because He says the word God gave Him to speak and that’s what pastors are supposed to do as Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Pastors are supposed to say the words that they were told. If they’re basing it off their own ideas and their own thoughts, they’re not fulfilling the ministry that they were given any more than if Christ spoke His own words or the Holy Spirit spoke His own words. Prophets are supposed to speak the words that they were given. Not just pastors, but that’s what every Christian is supposed to do. Romans 10:16-17, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” That’s how we’re supposed to witness and everyone has the responsibility to witness, not by coming up with our own clever means or our own wise ideas. The way we are supposed to witness is by speaking the words of God, that’s what prophets do. As it says in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit comes upon His church, all flesh will prophesy, all His children will prophesy. This is what it means to prophesy, to speak the words of God. Are you speaking the words of God to the people around you? Are you speaking the words of God to your children? Are you speaking the words of God to your neighbors? This is what it means to be a prophet of God. This is what’s required of those who are saved, not to speak our own words, but to speak the words of God. We’re supposed to speak the words that are given to us and that doesn’t just mean to quote Scripture. When Aaron is speaking the words of Moses, it doesn’t mean that he quoted him verbatim, but it means he says what Moses wanted him to say. When we speak the words of God we are supposed to say what God said and what He meant, not necessarily say it verbatim. That’s what it means to be a prophet, are you a prophet of God? “Then he did the signs in the sight of the people.” I would say that this has to be Moses and not Aaron. We know later that many of the declarations of the plagues are done by Aaron, they’re done by Aaron using his rod. The rod turning into the snake, it’s certainly possible it was Aaron’s rod, but the sign of leprosy was very specific to Moses and those are the two signs that Moses was given so I think it was Moses casting down his rod and Moses sticking his hand into his clothing and it comes out leprous. I think when it says that he did the signs in the sight of the people and they believed, I think that means that they didn’t do the third sign. Exodus 4:8-9, ““Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.”” I don’t think they did this sign because it’s very clear that they heeded the message of the first sign and the message of the second sign because their response was ‘the people believed’. This was the elders gathered together and the people believed. They saw the signs and believed they came from God. Now it

says that in Scripture, they believed, but they weren't saved. It also says that in Scripture, they did not have saving faith. We know that from Hebrews 3:16-19, "For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." They did not have salvific faith, but they believed. Even this morning as we read the SLBC, it talked about temporary believers. This is what they are, they believe, they say 'This is God', but when push comes to shove and they are told to go out in the desert to walk in this way they say, 'Did you bring us out here to kill us?'. This is unbelief. They believed but they had unbelief. They didn't believe enough to actually walk in the ways that God commanded them to walk. This is James' picture of faith without works. They believed in God, but not to the point where they would turn from their sin. They didn't believe in God to the point where they would trust Him. Right now they are trusting Him, they believe so they will go with Moses to confront Pharaoh. There is a real belief there that manifests itself in works, but they perish in the dessert because of unbelief. Just because someone worships God, and it can be true worship of God because they truly see Him, they have to be born again, they have to be changed. Those who are changed, they won't just have temporary belief, they will have lasting belief that produces true fruit, some tenfold, some fiftyfold, some one hundred-fold. This is the parable of the sower. There are temporary believers and that's what the elders of Israel were. We know that because Hebrews tells us that explicitly, they perish in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Here they believe when they saw the signs "and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel." They understood why Moses was sent, he was sent because God had not forgotten them. Through Moses Aaron explained why God appeared to him in Exodus 3:16-17, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'" They were happy that God had visited them and looked upon their affliction. He didn't just look on their affliction and not act, He looked upon their affliction and responded by sending Moses. He was going to do something about it. There was the promise of the land flowing with milk and honey, but that's not what they were focused on. They were a people that had been oppressed for decades. For more than eighty years they were suffering and the people over them were put to give them a burden that they could not bear. They were working to crush them, to constrain them, to minimize them so they wouldn't grow and prosper. That was the purpose of the burden. They were being afflicted so their focus at this point was to get out of affliction, not the promise of the land flowing with milk and honey to escape the affliction they were currently in. This is so much the picture of salvation. The usual reason for salvation isn't someone seeing that they can have eternal life, it's that my sin is destroying me and I can have freedom from it. The usual person that comes to salvation recognizes the curse of sin in their life and they want freedom from it. It's after we are saved that we see the bright and glorious promises God gives His people. The usual promise that people come to salvation from is to escape from sin, to escape from the affliction. Typically salvation starts just like it did at Pentecost, Acts 2:36-37, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know

assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They’re not asking how to have eternal life, they are asking how they can escape the judgement for having participated in the crucifixion, how can we escape the affliction to come? That’s what happens, that’s what the Israelites wanted. They wanted to escape the affliction, they weren’t looking towards the Promised Land. You can see that because once they escape the affliction, once they are out in the desert they rebel against God because it’s them trying to escape the affliction. But still “then they bowed their heads and worshiped.” This is the right response. Even when you come to faith and you recognize that God will free you from your sin, He will stop you from being a slave to sin even if you don’t see all His great and precious promises, even if you don’t see the promises and understand the promises of the kingdom of God and eternal life. Just escaping the affliction of sin, that God sees your affliction and He comes and He cares and He visits you, that’s enough to cause true worship. The word for ‘worship’ also means ‘to bow down’ so literally they bowed their heads, but internally they were also humbling themselves before God, but it means to worship. They truly worship God, they truly believed in God, they truly believe that God was going to deliver them from their slavery in Egypt. They were being submissive to God, they were being humbled before God and later when the time comes to put their faith in action, they refuse. Not at first, they go with Moses to Pharaoh, but after the yoke of bondage is broken then they want to turn back to Egypt, they no longer want to obey God. Anyone who has been in the church long sees this a lot, this is a very normal thing that happens and it happened to Israel.

Applications

1. We should marvel at the shadows and signs that God has given us. When we think of the lives of Moses, Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, David, Nebuchadnezzar, all these men were pictures of Christ, all were imperfect sinners, but God still used all of them to foreshadow the realities of the One who was perfect, of the One who was without sin. It’s important as we think of this, the idea that God is directing everything in the world and He causes all the nations to fall to Nebuchadnezzar so Nebuchadnezzar can be a type, a picture of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Or like Solomon who rules over everything and he has this city filled with gold so silver is like stones on the street, silver is considered like gravel. God does all this and is directing and ordering all of the world for these pictures. It’s important for us to recognize the importance of the pictures, but it’s more important to recognize if God would do that for a picture, how much more will He do for the reality? How much more will He actually do for His church, the bride that He is cleansing? How much more will He do for the kingdom that was established when the Son went to rule with the Father? If He will affect nations like this just for a picture, how much more will He do for the reality of His bride? It’s important for us to marvel at that, to recognize the substance has come, He’s not just doing it to make a picture anymore. It’s so easy for us to look around, it’s so easy for us to look at our own nation and see the tremendous decay in morality because there has been an unbelievable amount of decay in morality over the last ten years, just incredible and hopeless. But if God would direct all these nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar to be a picture, you can

trust that He's doing something to bless the church of Jesus Christ, you can trust that He is doing all these things to build His kingdom. Let's make sure we interpret the reality just like we have a responsibility to interpret the shadows. The reality is that God is doing this, He is causing the rise of sodomy, He is causing our political classes to go mad, to be filled with confusion like it talks about in James, because they are filled with demonic infusion. That's where we are as a nation and we should take that as a rebuke because God has all things in His hand. God does all things for the blessing of His church, for the building of His kingdom. His name will be filled with His glory as the waters cover the sea. So we should marvel at the signs and the shadows, but we should also remember that we are in a better covenant. The old covenant, when they saw God cared about His people they worshipped Him. How much more, with greater revelation and understanding of the pictures, with greater fulfillment of the giving of the Holy Spirit, how much greater should we be filled with fear of God and worship of God?

2. Understand that we're saved to higher temporal judgements and we're sanctified to greater temporal judgements. The more we are given, the more that's expected. In terms of responsibility and in terms of knowledge and understanding, the more God gives us the more God will hold us accountable. There were probably many Israelites that weren't circumcised at the time of Moses, but God didn't go and seek to kill all the fathers, He sought to kill Moses because Moses had been given a role and responsibility and been given understanding that the rest of them didn't have. So God seeks to kill Moses, He didn't seek to kill everyone that didn't circumcise their children. We should remember that. The more responsibility we have, the more we should expect to be held accountable by God, the more God blesses us, the more we have the responsibility to put that in practice, the more God teaches us through His Word, the more we have the responsibility we have to put that into practice. As God matures you, as God sanctifies you, which is the same thing as God maturing you, the scourgings change, the things that you would punish a 16 year old for is very different than the things you would punish a one-year-old for. God has assigned Moses a task, God has given him to be a leader of the people and as such He is held to a higher standard. That means that elders are to be held to a higher standard. Yes, it does require two to three witnesses, but they are to be held to a higher standard. As you mature, as you're sanctified, expect God to hold you to a higher standard.
3. Have you skipped doing things with your younger children that you did with your oldest? Again, in my life I have seen this happen a lot, where people are careful and diligent about training their older children but the younger children, they get tired and lazy. We don't know the reason why Moses didn't circumcise his younger son, but we know he didn't, but it still is a valid warning to us. As you get busier, don't neglect the things that are most important with your younger children and the most important thing is to preach the gospel to them, to make sure they understand there is only one way to God the Father and that's through the Son.
4. Do you make excuses of what you can't do for God, but then turn around and do the same for others? Moses said he can't convince people, but turns around and convinces Aaron with no indication that he used the signs. How often do we do the same thing? We

say we can't tell a stranger the gospel, but then we go and talk to strangers. We say that we have nothing to say, but you have plenty of things to say at other times. Let's make sure we are not being hypocritical in the abilities that we have and the gifts that we have. "I just don't have time to do that", but then you find time to do other meaningless things that don't benefit the kingdom of God. "I don't have the money to do that", but yet you find money to do things for your own pleasure. We can do this with money, we can do this with time, we can do this with our abilities. Moses says he can't convince anyone and then goes and convinces Aaron. Let's make sure we're not like that, let's make sure that we are willing to use those things that God has given us for His kingdom first.

5. Don't look towards your worship for assurance of salvation. The elders of Israel truly worshipped God. There's no indication in the text that it wasn't true worship, that they weren't truly humbling themselves before God. It's easy to have good feelings towards God, it's easy to have a moment where you are worshipping God, but that's not what we are to look to when we look to our assurance in God. When we look to be assured of our salvation we should look to not be in rebellion to Him. We are servants of Him, doing what He says, that's what should give us assurance. Salvation is not just believing that God is. Demons believe that God is. Salvation is not being in rebellion to Him, the demons are in rebellion to Him. We can believe in God and look at Him and say how kind God was to do this, we can truly worship God, but if you're still in rebellion to God you're not a child of God. It's that God takes us and causes us in the heart, to not be rebellious to Him anymore, that is salvation, having a heart of flesh towards God. There are many who worship very sincerely who believe that they are submitted to God and bowing down in their heart to God when they worship. Just like the elders of Israel, but then they are persecuted by the world and tempted by the things in the world and they leave and they aren't submitting to God just like the elders of Israel. They perish in unbelief just like the elders of Israel. Sincere worship is something that those who believe in God do, people can sincerely worship, meaning sincerely believe they are submitting to God, sincerely humbling themselves towards God, saying they love God, they can do that with great sincerity, with great trust in themselves that it's true, but that's not the love of God. For this is the love of God, 1 John 1:3, "That we keep His commandments and His commands are not burdensome." Love of God is not worshipping Him, worship of God is the outworking of the love of God. Love of God is not rebelling against Him and submitting to Him.
6. We're to be a people of the word, pointing to the word of God rather than ourselves. There are so many so-called pastors who focus on speaking their own words, expressing their own ideas instead of expositing Scripture. Expositing Scripture is about saying what God says, what God means. That's what the Holy Spirit does, that's what He was sent for, to guide us in truth, to guide us in understanding, to speak the words of Christ. When you do that it's really easy to get a huge following of goats, but true pastors are supposed to shepherd sheep and that's what pastors need to be, they need to be people of the word, but not just pastors, people in the congregation need to be people of the word too. Collectively we are supposed to be fulfilling the Great Commission too. The Great Commission's summary is to cause the word of God to fill the earth because

that's how people come to faith and how they get baptized and come to obedience in Christ. We're supposed to be filling the earth with the word of God, in practice and not just words. Evangelizing and teaching your children and other things you do, do you see yourself like Aaron who is just speaking the words of another? Do you see yourself in whatever ministry you do, do you see yourself having the responsibility to just speak words of God? For that's what people need to hear.

Let's pray. Oh Lord God, we do thank You for this passage. We thank You for the purposes You have for it. Thank You that You have us here, that You have us in Your perfect wisdom. Lord we do pray that You give us greater wisdom about this passage, a greater understanding. We thank You for the difficulties in Scripture that cause us to wrestle with it and see the patterns in the things You are doing. Lord, we pray that You give us greater understanding and a greater awe of You. In Jesus Christ's name we pray, amen.