

# Israel Is My Son

Exodus 4:18-23, "So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand. And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 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.'""

Let me pray. Dear God, I thank You for bringing us to this passage this morning. I thank You for what You have for us to learn in it and I pray that You would help each of us to pay close attention and You will teach us through Your Holy Spirit. I pray all this in Your holy name, amen.

As we continue with the story of Moses being sent back to Egypt to cause the Israelites to be set free, what struck me first about this passage and reading it is just the parallels between Moses and Jacob. When you think of this point in the life of Moses, it parallels Jacob in so many ways. They are both chosen by God for a specific task. Jacob was the heir of Isaac even though he was the second born son because God appointed him to be the heir of promise from him, all the people of God would come from him. Moses was born and was such a beautiful child that from the beginning they knew he was appointed to be the heir of promise, the one who was the next leader of the Israelites. In the midst of that they both sin and they both have to flee. Jacob was the deceiver and stole the birthright and had to flee, Moses rising up and killing the Egyptian has to flee. Both had people that were looking to kill them. Esau wanted to kill Jacob and Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses. They both fled to a foreign country and became sojourners in a foreign land. Jacob went to Ur where Laban's family was and Moses went to Midian where Jethro was. They both lived in another man's house for a major portion of their life. These were greatly significant men in redemptive history, some of, if not the most significant after Christ. Israel and Moses are here and the majority of their prime years they live in another man's house. Maybe not a majority, but a significant number. Jacob lived in Laban's house for twenty years and Moses lived in Jethro's house for forty years. While they were there they were both given a wife and they both had children. Jacob married Rachel and Leah and the two handmaids and had twelve children. Moses married Zipporah and they had two children. When you consider these two such important people in the history of the world, it's interesting how much God caused their lives to parallel. Obviously, both are a type of Christ and they go to a foreign land to get a bride, this is why they parallel, because both are pointing to Christ. Both are in a position where someone desires to kill them, both of them were because of

unrighteousness and Christ was because of righteousness. The parallels are obvious, they're both used by God to take a small number of people and have them become a great multitude that gets delivered from Egypt. In this passage God said for Moses to tell Pharaoh that he will not let Pharaoh go and that He will kill Pharaoh's firstborn son which will be the firstborn of all the Egyptians. God is using Israel as the body of Jacob, his firstborn son because they have all come from Jacob. It's a type of the only begotten Son, it's a type of Christ, that God will only deliver those who are born again, those who are not the sons of Pharaoh, the sons of the picture of Satan. He does that by having his firstborn son die, Christ, those who are born again through the blood of Jesus Christ. So God has these pictures here, these pictures of the delivery, these pictures of important men in redemptive history so we think about Christ and what He did. Christ was the firstborn of all creation, He had to take on flesh, He had to be born of a virgin so that He could die, just like Pharaoh's son died so Israel could live. Christ had to come and die so the people of God could be delivered, so the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel could be freed. As we consider this and consider what God did with Moses and Jacob, that He caused all these things and caused them to spend decades so we could have a picture that points to Christ and think about who Christ is and what Christ did.

Verse 18, "So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." God had established Himself with Moses by talking to him out of a burning bush and now Moses is actually doing as he was commanded and was submitting to God. God had told him what he was supposed to do and he said, 'How can I do this? They won't believe me. I don't speak well.' God convinced him and he was doing as he was commanded. That means he was leaving that holy ground where he was standing and Christ, the angel of the Lord, was speaking to him out of the burning bush. In times going forward, there will be times where God speaks to Moses, where you see the pillar of fire, but we are also going to see in this passage that from now on God can speak to Moses and Moses knows it's God, he recognizes that it's the voice of God that speaks to him. God proved with signs, but after he receives the signs Moses can hear the voice of God. This is true for us too, that we do see signs, we do see the sign of Jesus Christ being lifted up, but after that we're supposed to hear Christ's voice. Christ said that His sheep hear His voice, we can recognize the voice of God when we have His Spirit to testify that it's the voice of God. Moses didn't need the sign anymore to say something came from God, we're not supposed to need those signs that say what God says, we're supposed to have that discernment from the Spirit and from the Word. When we're commanded to test every spirit whether it's from God, this is something we can do just like Moses could do it. He knew this was God speaking to him. "So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law." Just because God commanded him to go he doesn't ignore the responsibilities and the authority. He goes to the one, the leader that God appointed, so Moses still fulfills his duties even as he's given this call. It's interesting as I think about it, you think of Buddha, one of the major religions in the world, what happened when Buddha said he got a call from God? He abandoned his wife and children and he went his own way and he said he didn't have any responsibility in the world. That's not what God calls us to do. When we're born again it doesn't take us out of the family that we were in, it doesn't take us out of the

workplace we are in or our responsibilities. He gives us a new responsibility to love our boss or love those that we are with that we may have been enemies with. When we're saved God doesn't save us to deliver us from that or escape from that, He saves us so we can now be faithful in the midst of where He has us, very different than worldly religions. So Moses does what he should do, he goes and returns to Jethro his father-in-law, he doesn't just walk away from Jethro's sheep. Instead he fulfills his obligations and he speaks to him with respect and as someone who is over him in authority. Here is an eighty year old man and he still speaks to Jethro and asks for permission, please let me go. He asked for permission to leave, he didn't say, 'How can you tell me what to do? I'm an old man, I have rights. How dare anyone tell me what to do?' So often the elderly get cranky and say they want their own way. Wicked men wax worse and worse, deceiving their own being. That's the core of being wicked, you don't care about anyone else, all you do is care about yourself. That's why so many elderly are pretty cranky people that are pretty hard to be around. That's not how Moses is and that's not how we're supposed to be. We're to esteem others better than ourselves. Jethro was his authority, Jethro is the one whose house he was living in so he goes to Jethro and asks him to let him go and return to his brethren. He's been there for forty years and hasn't seen his brethren. When he was first announced to Jethro he was announced as an Egyptian, but I would think by this point they realize he is an Israelite, especially in the next passage where his wife circumcised the children. The Midianites were also descendents of Abraham so they should have been circumcising so circumcision shouldn't have been unusual to her, but it would seem that now they are thinking of him as a Hebrew and not as an Israelite. When he goes and says he wants to return and says "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt," he also makes the point that if they were Egyptians then they would obviously be in Egypt, but he is talking about his physical family, not his adopted family. "And see whether they are still alive." As you hear that, it's pretty obvious that he's not telling Jethro what God spoke to him out of the burning bush. Out of the burning bush God said to go and do these signs and wonders and your people will be let go, instead he says he wants to go to see whether or not they are still alive. Later it doesn't seem like he is hiding things from Jethro so I don't get the impression that it's a lack of trust in Jethro. Later he takes Jethro's advice when he says to divide how everything works and to set up multiple tiers where there are tiers under the top tier and there are leaders of fifty and leaders of thousands. While the plagues are going on he sends Zipporah and his children to be with Jethro so it's not like there is a lack of trust in Jethro. It seems more likely that what he is doing is he is testing God. What was the first sign that what God said He was truly God, the great I Am that was speaking out of the bush? He said "I have sent Aaron to meet you." So Moses says he wants to see if his brethren are still alive. Aaron at this point is 83, it would be a time where most people would be dead so for him to say he wants to see if his brethren are still alive, it seems to me the most likely thing that Moses is doing is testing to see if God really did what He said He did. The first sign that the prophecy was true is that Aaron is still alive, that he sees his brethren. So he doesn't seem to want to go out on a limb and tell Jethro everything God told him and instead he goes and says that he wants to see if Aaron is still alive, if his brethren are still alive like God said because if Aaron is truly going to meet him, it testifies. A sign of a true prophecy is that it comes to pass so Moses is saying, will this come to pass? Is Aaron alive? "And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."" It's actually a pretty big deal. One of the reasons I want to talk about the parallels between Jacob and Moses is to also to talk about the

contrast between their two father in laws because we can see really important differences between Laban and Jethro. I think in Scripture Jethro is a very righteous man and Laban is an unrighteous man. When we see their two responses when Jacob comes and says he want to leave versus when Moses comes and says he wants to leave, their responses are really different. We should make sure we respond with Jethro's response and not with Laban's response. We even see it when they've joined their father's house. We don't see it as greed when Jacob came to Laban, but we saw it in the generation before that when Abraham's servant came and was looking for a bride for Isaac, Rebekah who is Laban's sister, when the servant came to Laban's house, Laban responded out of greed. He invited Abraham's servant to his house in Genesis 24:30, "So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well." Laban wanted to bring Abraham's servant to his house because of greed and when Jacob comes to Laban's house he manipulates him to get years of servanthood for him for payment of Rachel and then he exchanges her for Leah to get seven more years of labor for Leah as well. The purpose of bringing Jacob into his house was purely for himself, not even for his children. As Leah and Rachel said in Genesis 31:14-15, "Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money." This is the unrighteous, the unrighteous in all this, Laban is just trying to figure out what he can get for labor. Then consider the contrast of that when Moses comes to Jethro's house. Jethro said, "This man helped you and you didn't even invite him over for dinner?" Exodus 2:19-20, "And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock." So he said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." Jethro's response is not to see how greedy he could be to get as much as possible from Moses, his response is that he needs to be thankful towards Moses. The daughters should be thankful towards Moses, why didn't you invite him in, why didn't you show hospitality to him? You see it especially when they ask to leave. The first time Jacob asked to leave Laban's response was not to go in peace, but rather in Genesis 30:25-28, "And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you." And Laban said to him, "Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake." Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give it." His care wasn't for Jacob, his care wasn't for his daughters, his care wasn't even for his grandsons, his care was for himself, he had been blessed because they were here and he just wants to receive greater blessing from God because Jacob was a man of faith, Jacob was a man who God blessed. Six years later when Jacob snuck away with all his animals, wives, and children, Laban doesn't say go in peace, Laban pursues after him and says that it's to say goodbye to his daughters, but he threatens Jacob to kill him and all his people, but God stopped him and told him he wasn't allowed to. He really wanted to take everything Jacob had rightly obtained as Jacob said in Genesis 31:42-43, "Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and

rebuked you last night.” And Laban answered and said to Jacob, “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock; all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?” The unrighteous want to think everyone is theirs, everything is about them, they don't want to consider others, they do what's good for them. It doesn't mean they can't be a blessing to other people, God causes them to be a blessing for other people because their desire for applause, their desire to feel self-righteous, holy, and better than other people. People do great blessings for others, they do it for themselves, but that's not what the righteous do, the righteous ask what is better for the other person and that's what Jethro does. When Moses comes to Jethro and says he wants to see if his brethren are alive, he doesn't go, 'But you're the head shepherd, what am I going to do with my sheep? How will I get anyone to care for them? How can you do this to me?' Jethro says to go in peace. Jethro is not focused on himself. In the next verses it sounds like he has young grandchildren, but he doesn't try to manipulate Moses by saying that is his daughter and his grandchildren that Moses is trying to take. You don't hear of the same blessing that Jethro received because Moses was there, but that would make sense because Jethro was a faithful man and God would have blessed him directly, He didn't need to give blessings through Moses. Jethro's concern is not about himself, but about them. The reason I want to talk about this and have spent this much time on it is because there are a lot of leavings that happen in life. It happens in business all the time, people come and say they are giving their two week notice. It's easy as an employer to think, 'I have these responsibilities, how am I going to work this out?' and it's easy to be like Laban. The truth is that we are supposed to be like Jethro and ask if it's good for them. Obviously I'm just using business as an example, but this is going to happen to everybody in this room that's a parent. At some point in time their child is going to come and say it's time for me to leave and how are you going to respond? We own a farm up in Granville county and two owners before that, the mother basically said to her son, 'If you stay unmarried until I die, I will give you the farm, I will give you an inheritance. Otherwise I won't, I will give it to your brother.' She manipulated him to not leave, very much like Laban, it was all about her. We probably won't be that extreme, but we should ask ourselves when someone leaves, 'what's the purpose?'. Are we going to be a blessing to them? When our children leave, it talks about in Deuteronomy about how when you have a slave that goes out after six years, do not send them out empty-handed. You send them out in peace and with blessings. This is what we are supposed to do with our children when they leave. We're not supposed to say, 'But I have eight other children that are younger that I need help with. Some of these are young children.' Instead we say that it's a great blessing that God is moving them on in life and God has other things for them to do. The same thing can happen when people leave churches, that people get upset because all of a sudden this person was doing stuff and now it's not going to get done. Even with Ben that's what we are accused of, and I don't think that was the case with Ben at all. We need to make sure that's not our attitude, there are times where God moves people along because they have another work to do somewhere else and that's a good thing and we need to be able to say 'Go in peace' and not, 'But how does this affect us?'. Those are just three examples of leavings and there are lots of other examples of leaving that happen in life and the real blessing of it is, at that point in time it is a good way to take your spiritual temperature. Do you really esteem others better than yourself or not? It's a time of disruption and at that time of disruption you can look and ask where your interest and care is.

Are you just caring about yourself or are you caring about other people? So we see such a stark difference between Laban and Jethro's reactions. Let's make sure when we react to situations like that we react like Jethro and not Laban.

Verses 19-20, "Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand." When Moses was at the burning bush, he was at the backside of the wilderness. I think most likely he was further down the Arabian peninsula and Midian is across from southern Egypt so they would be on the eastern side of the Red Sea and Egypt and further down would be on the western side of the Red Sea. So the way to get by land between Midian and Egypt is to go north and to go where the lands are, like the River of Egypt is. When he returned to Jethro he probably would have gone north to Midian, where modern Media is. That all makes sense, to get to Egypt you would go north and if he went north he would have crossed the Suez Gulf. The problem with that is, in a few verses he will meet Aaron at the mountain of God, the same place where he was at the burning bush. That either means when he headed out he went south for some reason instead of going north, maybe because there was a ship he was going to take, but we don't know. Maybe he went that way because God told him to go there because that's where he was supposed to meet Aaron. Or maybe the order is wrong and he had Aaron with him at this point, but if he did have Aaron with him he couldn't have said he wanted to see if his brethren were still alive because he would know. So one of the reasons I raise this is because there is a lot of debate about where the mountain of the Lord is and the point is that it's complicated. It could be in lots of different places because the hints are not like, this is the way you would walk so you could go from here to here and you would be at the mountain of the Lord. Some people think it's north of Medina, some think it's south of Medina, but God doesn't want us to know where it is because if we knew where it was there would be lots and lots of people who would go and worship God there. Just like if we knew where Moses' body was, there would be lots and lots of people, since 60% of people in the world think Moses was a great prophet, there would be lots and lots of people that would go and worship Moses' body so instead God hid it. God has hidden where the mountain of the Lord is, we don't really know. What we do know is that Moses was in Midian and he's told to go and return to Egypt. God had told him before what was going to happen, but He didn't necessarily give him a time frame. Here when He says 'Go', this is literally 'walk'. He's telling him to walk, to get moving. I think it's likely that he is still in ways delaying to follow the commandment of God and that he is hesitant to do this and God tells him to go do it, to walk. We should remember that so many of the sins that we will see as we continue through Exodus, we will see so many sins in Israel and recognize Moses did the same sins. Moses didn't do what God commanded, Moses hesitated to do what God commanded and God has to keep exhorting him. Just like Jesus Christ was tempted in every way that we are, but without sin, so that He could lead His church and could sympathize with our temptations. God takes Moses through so many of the same things that He takes Israel through, the people that Moses is leading. So Moses has an understanding of their temptation, an understanding of their reluctance, but God gets him to go. One of Moses' reluctances must be because people would still be trying to kill him because God said all the men who sought his life were dead. He

repeated the command, but He also understood what was causing the delay. Moses was hesitant to go back because he wasn't sure if Pharaoh was still trying to kill him. Moses needed encouragement to not be concerned about the people who wanted to punish him for killing the Egyptian. It might be Pharaoh and the government, but it's very likely it also could be that the avenger of blood, when someone is murdered a member of the family's purpose is to kill him. When Moses introduced the concept, it's assumed that there was not much fleshed out about it. So it could be the family of the Egyptian was the one who wanted to kill Moses and that that concept of the avenger of blood was already in place. So either way, God is telling Moses that you don't need to be concerned about it, the people hunting for you to kill you are now dead. So "Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey." After he had assurance from God he loads them up. We know his two sons are Gershon and Eliazer from Exodus 18:2-4, and he sets them on a donkey. Donkeys are pretty small so he's putting three people on a donkey and if they were young then, if they were past the age of puberty they would almost certainly be expected to walk and they wouldn't have a position of honor compared to their eighty year old father. It seems likely that the two sons were of a young age so Moses was walking and they were riding and all three of them could fit on a donkey. Those donkeys can't carry that much weight. If you remember the timeline Moses came and met the seven daughters of Jethro forty years earlier so if he had young children now, which is hard to imagine them being over the age of ten of something, that means there was a thirty year period between when he came and when he had children. We don't know when he got married to Zipporah, but it's been a long time as you compare that again to Jacob with Laban, it's thirty days where Laban goes to Jacob and asks what his wages are and he says he will work for seven years for Rachel. Moses doesn't have the same focus so Moses was probably around seventy when his first child was born. He set them on a donkey and they returned to the land of Egypt. We will find out more about that trip next week, when God starts to kill Moses for his disobedience about circumcision and Aaron joins with them. "And Moses took the rod of God in his hand." God told him to take the rod and with the rod he would do the wonders and we see Moses obeying. He's taking the rod in his hand, this is the way he was going to convince the elders of Israel, this was the way he was going to convince Pharaoh. It was not by his words, but by the signs that he would show by having the rod. So by taking the rod he's testifying that his plan is to obey God and to do those wonders that God commands.

Verses 21-23, "And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 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.'" We have God speaking to Moses, not with any signs or a burning bush, but He's speaking and Moses recognizes that it's God speaking. Again, we should think of this as Christ, we know it was Christ speaking out of the burning bush so it's probably Christ through all these, that this is the voice that Moses associates with God, the voice of Christ. "When you go back to Egypt", God is now speaking that this will happen. He has commanded Moses to go and He says when that's completed, "see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand." Now He's encouraging Moses to do all

the wonders before Pharaoh. He's already told Moses that there would be other wonders that would be done, it wouldn't just be the staff turning into a snake and it wouldn't just be the other signs that there would be other wonders. He's saying to Moses, make sure you do all the wonders, all of them had to be completed before Pharaoh would let the Israelites go. He said that in last week's passage as well. Now He is going to tell Pharaoh what the final wonder is so he will know when they are complete and he is allowed to go. God probably told him to see that he did them all because he would have pity on the Egyptians. It would be easy for him to sympathize with these people even as they oppressed his people, that he would not want their firstborn to die. This is so common. We hear God's commandments and we think that those are too harsh, those are too difficult, we shouldn't do that. I think He's telling him to make sure he does all these wonders before Pharaoh to remind him not to substitute his judgement for God's judgement. God gave him the ability to do these wonders and he was to do them. As we go forth through Exodus, we find out more typically that it's Aaron with his rod who physically uses his rod to cause the plague to come so it's not that the rod is magical with Moses, it's that this was the means, Moses was the means that these miracles would come. So he put his ability to control the miracles, because he commanded Aaron to bring these judgements upon Israel, so it's by the hand of Moses when he commands Aaron that these wonders happen. So God is commanding Moses to do these things, but He is also giving Moses the ability to do them. It's by Moses' will that they are done. Again, we see the picture as we do multiple times, we see the picture of man's responsibility, man's free will and also the decreed will of God. God has said these things will happen, but He also tells Moses to make sure you do these things because I have given you the ability and responsibility to do them. Then God tells Moses, "But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." Again, we see another picture of man's free will with the decree of God joining together. God's going to harden Pharaoh's heart, this is what God has decreed, that Pharaoh's heart will be hardened. That doesn't mean Pharaoh didn't choose to harden it, Pharaoh willfully chooses to harden his heart. As the miracles happen the fear and torment will come upon Pharaoh and he will agree to let them go, but as soon as it's over he will decide not to let them go. He is the picture of Satan, the picture of the person whose yes is not yes and whose no is not no. He's the picture of the deceiver, the picture of all these things and he has a free will and his free will does exactly what God would have him to do. God could have chosen to subdue Pharaoh's pride, but instead He wanted all the miracles and judgements to be done on Egypt so that there would be a picture of Jesus Christ and a picture of what Christ had to come to do. So instead of Pharaoh turning because of the punishment to Egypt, he just rebels further even to the destruction of Egypt. He will not repent, will not turn anymore than Satan will, even though Satan will destroy everything including himself in order to not submit to God. Pharaoh is the same way because he is the picture. Then he will not let the people go, he will not follow what was agreed to before, he was willing to be destroyed, he was willing to have Egypt to be destroyed, he was willing to have his firstborn son to be destroyed. He was willing for all these things to happen to maintain the position that he was in power and there was no power over him. Pharaoh was willing to maintain that policy at all costs. If you remember eighty years before, we know at least eighty years and maybe some time before that, a Pharaoh had risen up that said we can't let these people become so numerous so they rise up and leave Egypt. This had been the policy of the Egyptian government for a long time so this Pharaoh says he won't be the one to cause this to pass and he will allow the destruction of his

country over it. "Then you shall say to Pharaoh," this was a message to Pharaoh to understand. It's clearly foreshadowing the message of Jesus Christ, but the message wasn't just for the people of God, the message was for Pharaoh. The message was for the type of Satan as well. As the powers of the world, they are supposed to know the message as well. Even those who will fight against the gospel of Jesus Christ, God sends Moses and says make sure Pharaoh understands what the cost will be. We have that duty to make sure that we make the leaders of our culture understand what the cost will be, what the cost will be to rise up against the church of Jesus Christ, what the cost will be to persecute the church, what the cost will be to even pervert the church and to twist it and cause it to blaspheme the name of Christ. You look at Japan, before it got destroyed in World War 2, it was fine to worship Christ as long as you bowed down to the emperor before you went it. They had it set up with a little temple in the vestibules and God destroyed Japan because of it. Understand the destruction that comes is because of what happens to the church because history is written for the church. So we have a duty to declare that to nations, we have a duty to declare that to leaders just like Moses had a duty to say to Pharaoh what would happen, how his first son would die because he would not let God's people go. We have a duty to declare to the civil magistrates that this is what happens, this is what destruction looks like, destruction will come upon you. That's what the book of Isaiah is about, you didn't show hospitality to the Israelites so you are going to be destroyed. That's not just for I think it was either Edom or Moab that God says He is going to send judgement upon them because they wouldn't show hospitality to the Israelites. God didn't just give that as an example to them, He gave it as an example to show us and we are supposed to warn the nations that this is what happens who persecute the people of God and this is what Moses is to say to Pharaoh. This is what will happen to you because you will not let My people serve me, this is what I am going to do to you. This is a similar message that we have today, that we have the responsibility to give. "Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn." This is what the Self Existent One declared and this is what Moses is to say to Pharaoh that Israel is My son. Just as Israel was the bride of Christ, Israel was also His adopted son. It says that in Romans 9:4, "Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises." Physical national Israel is the picture of these things of spiritual Israel, we are the adopted son of Christ, the son of God. When we think of ourselves as the body of Christ that means we are the son of God, collectively not individually. That's how God looks at His church, as the son of God, so if the world attacks and comes against the church of Christ, God says you are attacking My firstborn Son. Israel is singularly His Son, He is saying Israel is My Son and Israel obviously is another name for Christ which is going to be the picture later as being something greater because Christ is the Father's Son as well. Israel was singularly His Son, collectively they were the Son of God just like the church of Jesus Christ collectively is the Son of God, it is the body of Christ. In Genesis in particular, the concept of a firstborn is repeatedly talked about and the importance of it. Specifically of replacing who the firstborn is. Jacob was the firstborn, but Esau was actually physically the firstborn, but Jacob has the birthright, he becomes the firstborn because buys the birthright from Esau for a pot of porridge. Or Ephraim when Jacob reaches out to give the blessing and he puts his right hand on Ephraim's head rather than Mannasah's head, this is the second son becoming the firstborn son. Judah replacing Reuben. And here God is saying Israel is His firstborn son, but it doesn't end up being the real firstborn Son, the real firstborn Son is

the church of Jesus Christ, it replaces the firstborn Son. Here's what it means to be a firstborn, Genesis 49:3, "Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." Israel is the firstborn until the church because Israel is the testimony of God's power to the world, it's the beginning of His strength, the beginning of knowledge of the world and who He is and what He can do for His people. That firstborn son, the testimony is when they go to Jericho and they are outside the walls of Jericho and everyone says they are going to get destroyed, He destroyed Egypt to protect His Son and He will destroy us to protect His Son. The firstborn is the projection of His strength and might and that's what Israel is for God. So Moses was to tell the Pharaoh so that Pharaoh would understand the judgement that was going to come upon him because he was attacking the firstborn son of God. Again, we have the same duty to say the same thing today. Civil magistrates and people that rise up against the church of Jesus Christ, they are touching the firstborn of God and it is a dangerous thing to touch the firstborn of the Creator of all. "So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me." Moses was to relay to Pharaoh a specific message, that Pharaoh had to let the firstborn Son of the ever existent One, the One who will always be, that he had to let him go so his son could serve him. His son was not to be a slave in Egypt, his son was to be a slave of God, a servant of God. If he didn't let him God, He would deal with Pharaoh just like a father would deal with someone who kidnapped, assaulted, and abused his son. God is giving us a picture that that's what it looks like with Pharaoh and Israel. He better let him go so he can serve God and that's an important point, that he is to let God's Son go to serve God. This is what the world still tries to do. It loves when God's Son serves them. They were fine with Lot in the gates of Sodom where he's giving advice about what is just, he's giving advice on what should be done. Everybody loves Lot then, it's only when Lot says we need to serve God, it's only when Lot says we can't do this perverse thing of God that they hate him. That's what Laban did with Jacob, he was happy to have Jacob and receive the blessings of the people of God, but when Jacob says he has to go back to his country, Laban says how dare you go back to your country. This is what the world does, the world frequently wants the church to bless them because they want the secondary blessings of the church. Think about our country right? Next year is the 400th year of the Pilgrims coming and this country went from nothing to being the most powerful country in the world in an amazingly short period of time, not because of the righteousness of the country, but because of the blessing of the church in this country because the church has real effects by shining forth the light and turning people from sin. Our country and other countries, their response is not to say the blessings are great and to turn to the Living God, the response is to try to get the church to serve them rather than serve God. The same thing that Laban and Pharaoh wanted. We need to make sure that as the church, we're not just serving the people around us for the secondary blessings that they receive, it is a good thing to feed people, it is a good thing to see people warmed and filled, it is a good thing to provide prosthetics to those without limbs in Nigeria, but if we do it and that is the end then we are not serving God, we are serving people, we are serving people like Pharaoh. The church frequently wants that. It's easy for the church to get grants from the government to go provide food for the poor, to provide clothing for the poor, this is really really simple to do as long as you are willing to do one thing and say you will not mention the name of Jesus Christ, because the world is happy to receive the secondary blessings from the church. We all need to make sure in what we do, we are serving God and not just the people around us.

Obviously with the prosthetic clinic, it is important for us to remember it has to be about the kingdom of Christ and building the kingdom. It is a good thing to be a blessing and care for people, but we are not here to just love our neighbor without loving God, because in the end loving your neighbor without loving God is not really loving your neighbor because it's to ignore the most important thing that your neighbor needs to know and that is to repent and turn to the Living God. Then God tells Moses what warning to give, "But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn." If you refuse to let the Son of God do his primary responsibility, which is to serve his Father, God instructed Moses to say this to Pharaoh even though He had already told him to say this and Pharaoh would not hear, it was still his responsibility to make sure Pharaoh knew this. This is the primary argument the Arminians use, they say it is sinful for God to command something to do particular election because to do particular election means He commands something that is not possible for them to do. They define that to be sin of God and when you boil down all their theologies, this is the basis of their theology, God cannot command us to do something that we don't have the ability to do. Right in this passage, it is very clear, He is telling Pharaoh, the most powerful person in the world at that point in time, here's what you have to do and I will not let him do it, I will harden his heart. This is a clear statement against Arminianism and there's a reason why intellectual leaders in Arminianism always go to sinless perfectionism, because the basis of it is, God cannot command us to do something that He didn't give us the ability to do and God commanded us to be perfect as He is perfect. So every one of them that is intellectually challenged, they always go to the same thing, sinless perfectionism has to be true. Whether it's Wesley or Finney, they all go to the same place because this is the basic concept, it is sin for God to command something that people can't do. Well guess what, He does it all the time and He is not sinning, it is not sin at all. God is the Creator and He can do whatever He wants, who are we to respond against God? This passage is very clearly against and completely undermines the basic view of Arminianism because God said He was going to harden his heart, go tell Pharaoh to let the people go, but I'm going to harden his heart to make sure he does not. God commands us to do our responsibility and it's our responsibility to do it even if we lack the ability. We are to command people to believe even though God has to work in their hearts to believe, we are to command people to repent even though God has to work in their hearts to cause them to repent. This is the nature of the gospel, it's to command people to do things they cannot do unless God in His mercy, grants them the ability to do it. That's what Moses was to declare to Pharaoh and what we are to declare to a dead and dying world. This is what we do, it is not sin on God's part, it is the mercy of God that God tells us it's our responsibility. God can justly give us responsibilities and not give us the ability. Paul responds to this very idea in Romans 9:20, "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" We don't have the right to say to God 'but it's Your fault', we have the responsibility even if we don't have the ability and God can rightly judge us because of that because we don't have a claim on God. "But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn." If Pharaoh refuses to do what God commanded then He would kill the firstborn of Egypt including the firstborn of the cattle. Just as God considered all of Israel to be His Son, He's also considering all the people of Egypt to be the sons of Pharaoh and as the children of Pharaoh, God was going to kill one of them, specifically kill the firstborn. He would kill the firstborn of Pharaoh, His judgement on Pharaoh for what Pharaoh

had done by not releasing the firstborn of God. Obviously this whole passage about killing the firstborn, it's primary purpose is to point towards Christ. What's required to force the world, to force Satan to deliver the firstborn Son of God was for the firstborn to die, the Firstborn of this world, which is Christ. There's two different firstborns of God here. There's the one that's delivered which is defined in Colossians 1:18, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." The church is the firstborn of God, that is the one who gets delivered when the real firstborn dies. The other Firstborn is Christ, it wasn't Adam, but Adam rebelled against his Father and he lost his position. So God caused another One to be born perfectly, to be born without sin, to be not a child of Adam, but still part of this world and that was the second Adam. Just like Ephraim becomes head over Manassah or Jacob becomes head over Esau, Jesus Christ becomes head over Adam and He is the firstborn of God and as the firstborn of God, the firstborn of the world, He is the One who has to die in order for the other firstborn to be released. This is the gospel. This is the Firstborn dying so the second firstborn can live, this is why Jesus Christ went to the cross, this is why Jesus Christ took on flesh.

#### Applications:

1. Do you esteem others better than yourself? Do you care more about the well-being of others than your ease, than your comfort, than your wealth? When people leave, that's a good time to evaluate what your actual attitude is towards other people. It's easy when we're going through our life to think we are caring for people, but when somebody leaves, when your child reaches the point of getting married do you say, 'How am I going to do all this stuff?' or do you say, 'What a blessing that they are moving forward!'. Same with an employer, same with so many things that happen in life. It's a good time to ask yourself the question, do you esteem others better than yourself? Do you care about your neighbor more than you care about yourself? So often when people leave a church they go and try to get other people to follow them because they're trying to justify their own decisions as opposed to actually caring about the other people. So often on both sides, when God has moved people from one place to another, it's a time to ask if you esteem others better than you esteem yourself.
2. How many times do you need to hear the same command from God? God has been telling Moses a lot of times to go to Egypt and finally here he says to go, get up and start walking. How often are we like that? Brothers, we're not supposed to be like that. We have a huge advantage over Moses, we have the Spirit of God that convicts us of sin, that God sent into the world so the world was convicted of sin and how much more are we to be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit? We're not supposed to have to be told over and over again, we're not supposed to have to read the same Scripture passage over and over again and say, 'Yeah, I should get around to that.' What we need to do is start obeying. As we go through Exodus, one of the things that I said is we need to look for examples in here. Don't follow Moses' example of having to be told a lot of times, that's not a righteous example. Follow Jethro's example and say, 'Go in peace', but don't follow Moses' example. When we are commanded by God to do something, it's easy to

slowly walk, to make excuses, it's the same thing all your children do when you command them to do something. Don't be like that. We should just do it. We see God judging Moses for it, we see God getting angry with Moses for it, we see God almost kill Moses for it because he keeps hesitating in doing what he's supposed to do. Let's take that as a warning, when we hear the commandments of God we are supposed to just do it. Understand it's hard to do, one of the most suspicious things I hear when I have heard people's testimony is when they say they hear a commandment of God and they always do it. I almost always go, 'Yeah, I don't believe that, you just lied.' None of us are like that, but at the same time we should recognize all of us are to be like that, that is what we are supposed to be like, we are supposed to have that soft of a heart towards God, we are to develop a heart that is soft towards God. Not just individually, but as a people, as a local church we should ask ourselves the question if there are things we need to repent of and if there are things we need to be doing differently. We should be about the business of figuring out the places that we are to be serving God and we aren't. Let's not hear the same commandment over and over again, let's actually go and do it.

3. Do you trust God's ways over your own? I think He's warning Moses multiple times, do all the wonders, here's the last wonder, the firstborn will die. I think it's because it's normal for us to want to show pity. If we are esteeming others better than ourselves, it's normal for us to care, even for someone who has been subjecting your brethren, but God says don't do that. For instance, in the law against perjury in Deuteronomy 19:18-21, "And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." It's our tendency to say biblical justice is so harsh, it's without mercy and it's our tendency to want to pity them, it has to be Moses when he's looking at the destruction on Egypt when he used to be one of the leaders in Egypt. He had to have looked at it and thought, "Really? I have to go and destroy all of the firstborn sons?" God's answer is to trust His judgement and not his. Make sure we do the same, trust God's judgement and not ours for His judgement is righteous, His judgement is perfect. What we call mercy is not mercy. If in that case, Moses is very clear, if you don't and show pity on them, what you are not doing is you are not putting the evil out from among you. Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 5, and if you do that it grows like leaven and it gets worse and worse and this so called mercy that you showed wasn't mercy because you caused so much damage. I look over the last fifty years of our countries history and people said these divorces where people just don't like each other, we're making it so hard because you have to commit adultery and you have to do these other things so let's just do a no-fault divorce, we will let people get divorced for whatever reason they want. Now 50% of marriages end in divorce, they thought they were being merciful, but they weren't being merciful at all, they were being cruel. Do not allow your judgement to replace God's judgement. God knows what is just, God knows what is good and God is warning Moses not to stop, do all the wonders. We need to make sure

we say we're not going to stop, we're going to do all the things that God has commanded us because His wisdom is far greater than our wisdom.

4. Is the world getting in the way of you serving God? We need to be really paying attention and making sure we are cognizant of when that happens. It's the normal way where the church gets resisted right? It's George Bush's thousand points of light where he says any church that wants to, we will give you a government grant so you can feed the poor and all these other things and it stops being about serving God and it starts to be about serving people. The churches can even applaud themselves by saying look at the people we are caring for, but they stop serving God and start serving the world. Make sure we are paying attention when that happens, make sure you personally pay attention when that happens. The state is happy to have the church serve them, they've always been happy to have the church serve them, they're not happy when the church serves God so the state is always happy to twist it so the church thinks they are still serving God, but instead they stop and serve the state. Make sure that you're looking for that in your own life, these things that you're doing, like I used the example of the prosthetic ministry, it's a good thing to do, but if it's being done without the preaching of the gospel, we're doing it to serve man rather than to serve God and that's not sufficient. We need to ask ourselves when we are doing good things, are we really just being a blessing to our neighbor or are we serving God too? Are we truly loving our neighbor? Because to truly love our neighbor you also have to love God and to truly serve your neighbor you also have to serve God. If all we did was give them a prosthetic and don't preach the gospel to them, then we're not really helping them. All we are doing is helping it be easier in their life before they go to hell and we're not really demonstrating love to them. Each of us in our lives we can do the same thing, we can get caught up in the ministry where it stops being about serving God and starts to be about serving the world. Let's make sure we watch for that and make sure we serve God.
5. Vengeance is God's, He will repay. He gives us examples towards Pharaoh that He is going to kill the firstborn of Egypt and He kills the firstborn of Egypt as punishment for their treatment of the Israelites. Understand, He promised to do the same thing for His church now. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9, "Which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Just as God takes vengeance on Pharaoh, God takes vengeance on all those who attack His church. Sometimes it's temporal, but it will always be eternal. We don't need to take vengeance, God looks at us as His firstborn, He will deal with it. Vengeance is His saith the Lord.

Oh Lord God, we do thank You for this passage that You have given us this morning. You have given us this word that has so many things in it that I believe I have only just begun to touch on. Lord, let us see the things that we need to see and hear the things we need to hear. Let us be convicted through Your Spirit and the things we need to be convicted of. Lord, we thank You that You are a God who loves Your children, You are a God who does protect Your church, You are a God who does defend us against the world. Let us be the Son that serves his Father, let us be the son who finds delight in serving his Father. Lord, we thank You that You are a God who sent Your Son to be killed so that we could be delivered from the world, we can be delivered from spiritual Egypt, we can have our bondage to sin broken. We thank You that You cared so much for Your church that You were willing to sacrifice Your only begotten Son, the One who is without fault, without blame, without sin, without any blemish, and You sacrifices Him for us. Lord, let us be a people that see that cost, let us be a people that see that blessing, let us be a people that respond as we should respond, by giving You all glory, giving You all honor, giving You all praise, giving You all service. We do pray that You work in us to be more faithful servants of You, more faithful stewards of the things that You have given us, that You have put in our hand, for You have put the world in our hands, the hands of Your church to be faithful steward until You come. Make us more faithful stewards. We ask this in Your Son's name, amen.