

Where Do We Fit In With Gods Plan

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[0 : 00] There have been many scientific discoveries over the last few centuries, but one of the most, by far, significant scientific discoveries was actually an astronomical discovery by Nicholas Copernicus, a Polish astronomer in the early 1500s when he calculated that the sun does not actually revolve around the earth, but it's the other way around.

Now, this was in the 1500s. This was big news because up until that time, people assumed because the sun rose and said that the sun revolved around us.

The sun revolved around the earth, but Nicholas Copernicus worked out it was actually the other way around. The earth, in fact, is just one of the many planets that revolve around the sun. Now, many people didn't like that idea because many people liked the idea that we're in the middle of everything, and they didn't like the idea that we're just another planet revolving around the sun. And so he got a lot of hostility, did Copernicus, from people who didn't like these newfangled ideas. But his discovery actually set in motion a chain of other discoveries because for the first time, it was called the Copernican Revolution, actually.

This discovery was the beginning of so many more scientific discoveries because for the first time, the stars actually made sense to people.

[1 : 32] They could look at the stars and they could trace how the stars moved and the planets moved. And for the first time in all of astronomy, the stars actually made sense because they realized they weren't in the center of things.

That was the key. That was the key to making sense of the universe was when humans realized the earth wasn't in the middle, wasn't the center. Well, did you know the same principle applies for you in your relationship with God?

It's only when you realize that you are not the center of what God is doing in this world and in your life that things actually start to make sense. And you can see how things start to fit together. But the key to it all, the key in our relationship with God is actually realizing we are not in the middle of it. We are not the center. And I think every person needs to undergo that Copernican revolution in their own mind to realize they are not the center of what God is doing.

That is something Moses had to realize in Egypt before he could be a useful part of what God was doing there.

[2 : 49] And I think it's in this passage that he realizes that for the first time, it's where the penny drops. I think it's here at the beginning of chapter 7 in Exodus that his attitude really changes.

It's quite interesting because at the end of chapter 6, he's still got problems with what God is doing. But by a few verses into chapter 7, he starts just obeying and listening to God for the first time in the story.

Because something God says to him in the first bit of chapter 7 here, which we're going to focus on, helps him to see, helps him to have that revolution in his own mind where he realizes that God is not doing all of this that he's been doing in Exodus so far for him.

God is not even doing this primarily for Israel itself. But God has a bigger agenda in all of this. And I think this is where Moses first realizes it.

And I think it's when we start to realize that same thing and we put not ourselves in the center that things start to make sense. When we realize that God has actually got a bigger agenda in all this, in what he's doing in the world, in what he's doing in our lives.

[3 : 59] And it's not about you. And it's not about me. Because God's bigger agenda, as we will see in this passage, is for God's glory. That's what he is about.

That is what he is doing. So let's have a look where we see this in the passage. Open up with me to Exodus 7. And look at Moses' complaint at the end of chapter 6.

6 verse 30. Moses is still complaining. He's been complaining for like four chapters now. On and off. Because he still doesn't get how this is the best thing.

How God choosing him of all the people, a guy who can't speak properly. He still doesn't quite understand what God is doing.

And so he says, verse 30, Moses replied in the Lord's presence, since I'm such a poor speaker, or I speak with such untrained lips, how will Pharaoh listen to me? This is his problem.

[5 : 02] Moses is saying, listen, God, you really could have done this better. I'm not the best person for this. Pharaoh is not going to listen to me. But I want you to see now, concentrate on this.

Moses says, I'm such a poor speaker, how will Pharaoh listen to me? You know what God's answer term is? God's answer term is, Pharaoh will not listen to you.

That was never the plan, Moses. Look at verse 4. That's exactly what God says. Beginning of verse 4. Moses complained, how will Pharaoh listen to me?

God's response, beginning of verse 4. Pharaoh will not listen to you. In fact, he was never meant to. You see, now, this is kind of the first time it's hit home for Moses.

Something bigger is going on here. And it's not about Moses' ability to convince Pharaoh. It never was. And God explains to Moses here.

[6 : 01] Pharaoh will not listen to you, but not because you're a bad speaker. He will not listen to you because I have made him not listen to you. Look at verse 3. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart.

I will harden Pharaoh's heart. Do you see what's going on here? Moses is worried that because he's such a bad speaker, Pharaoh is not going to listen to him.

God replies to him, no, Pharaoh is not going to listen to you, but it's not because of you. It's because of me. I'm going to harden his heart. And so once he gets that, once Moses understands that, his inabilities are actually irrelevant to the whole thing, right?

Once he understands the bigger picture. And it's from then that he goes on to obey. And he stops asking questions. It's this point in Exodus that he stops complaining and he just gets on with what God has given him to do.

Look at verse 6. So Moses and Aaron did this. They did just as the Lord commanded them. It's the first time that they're actually doing just as the Lord has commanded them. We see it again in verse 10.

[7 : 08] So Moses and Aaron went into Pharaoh and did just as the Lord had commanded. Now they're just doing what God commands because for the first time they realize there's a bigger agenda. And it doesn't matter whether they're good at what they do or not.

Because God is going to do what he's already planned to do. And that is a key for us as well. It really applies to us. Because we get so hung up on all our inabilities.

But God is sovereign and he is doing something much bigger than we think. Which makes our inabilities actually irrelevant. All God wants is our obedience. Like he wanted from Moses.

But for us to do that, the key is actually seeing that we're not in the center of things. That's what Moses had to see here. So let's consider this, why God did this.

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart? It's going to be something that comes up later a lot. As we go through the plagues, we often will read about God hardening Pharaoh's heart. And it's a key point in Exodus.

[8 : 09] That it's God who caused Pharaoh to resist Moses. Verse 3. I will harden Pharaoh's heart.

I will harden Pharaoh's heart. Have you ever wondered why? If God is sovereign over Pharaoh's heart. If God can decide what Pharaoh's reaction is going to be.

Have you ever wondered why he didn't just make Pharaoh let Israel go? If he's so sovereign over what Pharaoh thinks and does. Why didn't he just raise up a Pharaoh at that time that was friendly to Israel?

Like he did in the time of Joseph. If he's so sovereign over Pharaoh's heart, why didn't he just make Pharaoh happy to let Israel go? To free them.

Well, I'll tell you why. Because freeing Israel was not God's ultimate goal. In the Exodus. Freeing Israel was not God's ultimate goal.

[9 : 12] Rather, this was God's goal. Look at verse 5. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites from among them.

The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. That's God's goal. That the Egyptians know who he is. They know who they're dealing with. And not just the Egyptians, but actually all of us who read this

in every generation after it happened.

So, Alan read from Romans earlier. And Paul says this in Romans 9, 17. For the scripture tells Pharaoh, this is God saying to Pharaoh, I raised you up for this reason.

This is the reason that I raised you up, Pharaoh, that I may display my power in you and that my name may be proclaimed in the whole earth. God's goal in all of this.

God's goal in this Exodus. In this Exodus. In all of the stories of the Israelites being slaves and Pharaoh and all of this that we've read so far. God's goal in all of it is to make himself known to the world.

[10:41] That's his ultimate agenda. In other words, to show his glory to the world. That's God's goal. God's ultimate agenda is God's glory to be displayed to the heavens and the earth.

To all the creatures on earth and all the creatures in the heavenly places. God wants to make himself known. And that is not a selfish thing. Because God making himself known to his creatures is the best thing for us.

And that's God's agenda. To show us his glory in its fullness. You know what glory means?

We often use the word. But glory is essentially seeing someone for who they truly are. Seeing all of someone's attributes.

Displayed. So that we know who they truly are. That is seeing someone's glory. So we use the word in sports. Right? A team got glory for themselves.

[11:47] What do we mean by that? What do we mean when, for example, the Springboks get glory by winning the World Cup? Well, it means that we see them as world champions. When they win that World Cup, they are glorified.

They show their glory when they get in that bus and they come home. And, you know, they drive through the city and they show their World Cup and they get all the glory. And everybody is like clapping for them and cheering at them because they are the world champions.

Remember 2019? It happened. Hopefully it will happen again next year. But they got glory because we saw and they have proven themselves.

They have displayed their skills as world champions. We see them as world champions and so they get glory. But you know what? In order for them to drive around and get that glory from people, they first had to beat England.

In the World Cup final. For them to be seen as world champions. If they got to that final in, what was it, Yokohama Stadium 2019.

[12:48] And World Rugby had just given them the World Cup without them having to play England. Yeah, they would have had a nice shiny cup but they wouldn't have been seen as world champions. They had to beat England first in order to be glorified as world champions.

And in the same way, just as we wouldn't know the Springboks are world champions unless they beat England. In the same way, we wouldn't know who God really is if Pharaoh listened to Moses. Do you see? Do you see that for God's glory to be seen fully, Pharaoh had to refuse Moses. Moses. And that is why God hardened his heart.

So that he would. So that God would have to judge him and he would have to rescue the Israelite so that we could see who God really is. Because that is God's ultimate agenda.

And God hardening Pharaoh's heart, by the way, wasn't unfair. We might think it's unfair. And this is what Paul addresses in Romans 9 if you want to go into more detail. And is it unfair that God hardened Pharaoh's heart?

[13:54] No, not at all. Because God can show mercy to who he shows mercy. And the fact is that Pharaoh was a sinner already.

Pharaoh already had rebelled against God. So God just used rebellion that was already there in Pharaoh's heart. But instead of softening his heart, he hardened it. And he had every right to do that. And he did that deliberately to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so that he could teach the world something about himself.

Do you see that's God's ultimate agenda here? Not even to rescue Israel. God's ultimate agenda is to show you and me who he really is.

To show the world who he really is. That is what his ultimate agenda always has been. And there's two things here in the Exodus that God wanted us to know about him and wanted the Egyptians and the Israelites to know about him.

And the first thing, there's two things, right? The first thing God wanted us to know about him that we need to know about him is that he is the world's true judge.

[14:57] That's partly what the whole Exodus event was here to teach us. That he is the world's true judge. And we all need to know. We all need to know that there is such a thing as justice in the world, don't we?

We all need to know that deep down inside. That's why we love it in the movies when the bad guys lose. And the good guys win. Don't we love that? In westerns, if you like westerns.

You don't, you know, there's that horrible gang with the scars on their face and they wear the black hats and they're terrorizing the small town. And then the heroes swoop in on their horses and they have this big gunfight and the bad guys lose and we just feel so good about it.

Justice has been done. In those police procedural shows that we watch, you know, they're quite boring. And yet they're still one of the most popular formats of shows.

Why? Because the bad guys get caught in the end. And we love to see that. You see, when the bad guys lose in the movies and the TV shows, it connects with something deep down inside us.

[16:05] Our innate desire for justice. Because we live in a world where we don't see enough of it. We don't see enough justice. And so we love to escape by watching movies and TV shows where justice is done.

But God wants us to know, and this is one of the reasons he did what he did in Exodus in Egypt. God wants us to know that in a world that seems so unfair, in a world where the bad guys get away with things, in a world where evil people prosper and good people suffer, God wants to assure us that there is perfect justice.

It does exist. And it is in him. And one day, we're going to see it. One day, ultimately, we're going to see God's perfect justice in the judgment to come.

When Jesus comes back and all people stand before him and true justice is done. But of course, there's a reason why there's a delay.

And in the meantime, every now and again in history, God reminds us that there is such a thing as justice. And he did it here in Egypt. That is one of the reasons for this whole story.

[17:23] It is one of the reasons he hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he could show the world that there is such a thing as true justice. And it's found in him. No one can get away with wrong forever.

Even if they think they can for a time. And we need to know that about God. For our lives to make sense. For us to live with any sense of sanity. We need to know that there is a God of justice.

And if it wasn't for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. And if it wasn't for the exodus. If it wasn't for him judging Pharaoh rightly and Egypt for this. We wouldn't have truly known that. And if it wasn't for other ways that he's displayed his justice.

We wouldn't know that. But it's because of these events in history that we can know a God of justice exists. And he's there and justice will be done eventually. But that's not the only thing God wants us to know about himself.

That's not the only thing we need to know about our God. Not only that he is the world's true judge. We also need to know equally that he is the world's true rescuer.

[18:29] He's the world's rescuer. That's also something we need to know. So look back in chapter 6. The previous chapter. Chapter 6 verse 6 to 7.

God is trying to explain to Moses and Aaron why he's doing what he's doing. And it's not about them primarily. And he explains why. Again in chapter 6 verse 6 to 7.

Let me read it to you. Why?

The next line. See, God's priority is always that people know who he is.

That's why he's doing all this. And in this case, it's that the Israelites may know that he is the one, the only one who can rescue them from their slavery.

[19:40] And that is something we all need to know. Because just as much as we need to know there is such a thing as true justice in the world, we also need to know there is rescue.

There's a way out of the mess that we find ourselves in. This world. This life with load shedding. And water running out.

And things breaking down. And our bodies not working the way they should. And this crime. And broken homes. And messed up marriages. And the destructive thoughts in our own heads.

And the sin that we are all slaves to. How do we break out of this? We need to know there's a way out. Otherwise we'll go mad. And we need to know that God is not only a God of justice.

Because then actually we're all in trouble. Aren't we? If that is all God is. And you know, that's enough. That knowing there's a God of justice who will truly bring justice to the world.
[20 : 41] But if that's all God is, then we are all in trouble. Because we are all on the wrong side of God's justice. But that's not all that God is.

And that's what he wanted us to know. That's what he revealed to the Israelites here. That he is also the one who is willing and able to rescue people out of a helpless slavery they find themselves in.

He is willing and able to and wants to rescue us out of the mess that we're in. He wants to rescue you out of the mess that you're in. He wants to. And he can. And so do you see?

So where are we so far in what we've learned this morning? Firstly, God has a bigger agenda than Moses and Israel. And it's to display who he is to us, to the world.

What does he want to display? He wants to display that he is a God of true justice. But also that he is a God of rescue. Perfect justice and merciful rescue. And both of those are equally part of the character of the true God of this world.

[21 : 47] And aren't we thankful for that? It didn't have to be that way. We could have woken up in this world, been born, and realized and learned that the God that made it all is just a God of justice.

And we're in trouble. And that would have been totally good and right. But we learn something else. He's also a God of mercy. The true God. The God who actually made all this.

And who actually revealed himself as a God of justice, but also a God of mercy. And they're both true of God. And that is why Exodus is much bigger than Moses or Israel.

And the reason Exodus is such a key event in the Bible and in history is that this is really the first time in history that God is truly showcasing who he really is.

That's what Exodus is about, actually. It's not so much about the history of Israel. Obviously, it's about that. And we learn about how the nation of Israel came about and Moses' place and all that.

[22 : 55] But the true main theme of this book of Exodus is God showcasing who he really is to the world. You know what I mean by showcasing?

You know what a showcase is? My mom has a showcase in her lounge. It's filled with a whole bunch of stuff from my childhood. It's actually quite nice to go and look and reminisce.

But when you visit someone's house, maybe you don't know them. Sometimes there will be a showcase in their front room. And it maybe has some medals from sporting events.

Maybe it's got some old family photographs, a scrapbook or two. And you can look and it's got like a glass front and you can browse. And just this showcase, even before you've met the person, it gives you a snapshot of who they are.

It gives you a snapshot of their character, their history, who they are. Well, Exodus is a showcase to those who live in God's world who God really is.

[23 : 57] That's why it's right here at the beginning of the Bible, the second book of the Bible. It's a showcase. As we enter into his world, we teach our children. As they enter into the world, we teach them the Exodus.

We learn the Exodus. We learn what happens because this is the showcase. This is the first real taste we have of the God we're dealing with. And it's the first time we actually see that he is a God of both justice and rescue.

But informative as the showcase is. The showcase is not the same as meeting the person, right?

You see a showcase and you see their medals and you see their history and you see what they've done.

You get a glimpse of who they are, but it's not the same as meeting the person. That's when you truly see who they are. When you meet them and you get to talk to them. And it's only when we met God.

And we got to talk to him. In the person of Jesus Christ. God in the flesh. It's only then that we saw this God of both judgment and rescue in his full glory.

[25 : 13] More than any time in history. More than the Exodus. We saw a God of perfect justice. But also merciful rescue.

And do you know where we saw that God in his full glory? On the cross of Jesus Christ.

When he died for the sins of his people. Jesus often spoke about that moment.

He knew he was going to die. He knew he came to earth. To die. On the cross and then to rise again. But he spoke often of the cross. In a strange way.

He spoke of the cross as his glorification. You know that? Often. You see it in the gospels. Jesus spoke of the cross. As his glorification.

[26 : 08] Why? Why did he speak of him dying this terrible, painful, humiliating death. As his glorification? Have you ever wondered that?

Well because it's there. On the cross. That God is revealed. The nature of who God truly is. Is revealed more than anywhere else in all of history.

Who God truly is. We see it there on the cross. Because it's there. In that moment in history. When Jesus died for sins. For the sins of his people. That we see God's perfect justice displayed.

So perfect. God will not sweep any sins under the carpet. Ever. And his justice is so perfect. That he will even go to the lengths of judging his own son.

For sins. He won't even let him off. Even though he never sinned. And he took on the sins of us. God's not going to let him off. Because God is a God of perfect justice.

[27 : 11] But also. At that same moment in history. We see God's merciful rescue of helpless people. By taking our sins on his own back.

Do you see how at the cross of Jesus Christ. The world sees God like we've never seen him before. And never will see again. Those two things at the same time.

On the cross of Jesus. And that's why Paul. When he's reflecting on this. In Romans chapter 3. He says. He says these words.

Romans chapter 3. Verse 26. He's talking about. Jesus dying for the sins of people. And he says God did this to demonstrate his righteousness.

Okay. So Jesus came. Jesus died. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness. At the present time. So as to be just.

[28 : 18] Look at this. To be just. And. To be the one who justifies. Those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3.

Verse 26. God did this. God sent Jesus. Jesus died. God. So that God could demonstrate. That he is both just. In punishing sins. And. He is merciful. In justifying those.

Who have faith. In Jesus. And so. The cross of Jesus Christ. Is the one moment. In history. That we see the nature. Of the true God. More. Than any other moment.

And that is why. Any attempt. To explain who God is. Without going to the cross. Is insufficient. If you want to explain. The nature of the true God. Who God is. Who made all this.

You need to take people. To the cross of Jesus. Because if you. If you don't. They'll never truly see. Who God truly is. If they don't understand. This justice. And this mercy.

[29 : 13] That happened at the cross. And that is why. Also. Any religious system. Any attempt. To present. God. The creator. Without.

The cross of Jesus. Is insufficient. Because it'll never show you. Who the true God is. The only way. You will ever see. And your friends will ever see. And your family will ever see. Who the true God is. If they. Is if they see the cross.

If you take them there. Because that. Jesus dying. That is where God. Has demonstrated. To all the world. His.

His earthly creation. And his heavenly creation. Who he truly is. But you know what. That also means. That also means. That the gospel. And what Jesus did.

Is not. First and foremost. About you. And me. Think about that. The gospel. Jesus dying. On the cross. Is not actually.

[30 : 10] About. You. Just as Moses. Had to realize. That the exodus. Was not about him. Or Israel. But about God.

Revealing himself. So the cross. What Jesus did. Was not first. To save you. But to glorify God. The night.

Before Jesus. Goes to the cross. He has an extended time. With his disciples. And then he has this prayer. In John 17. I'd commend you to turn there. It is a fantastic prayer.

And he prays. And he prays for himself. He prays for his disciples. He prays for. The church. And all the things. That are going to happen. After this. But right at the beginning. Of his prayer.

I want you to notice. His emphasis. If you're not there. Just listen. John 17. Verse 1. Jesus spoke these things. Looked up to heaven.

[31 : 06] And said. Father. The hour has come. Glorify your son. So that the son. May glorify.

You. And then from verse 3. This is eternal life. He's talking about us. That they may know you. Jesus knows.

That the best thing for us. Eternal life. Is by knowing God. That's the most important thing. That we know. Who God is. That they may know you. The only true God.

And the one you have sent. Jesus Christ. Verse 4. I have glorified you on earth. By completing the work you gave me to do. Verse 5. Now Father. Glorify me.

In your presence. With that glory I had. With you. Before the world existed. Jesus didn't go to the cross. Primarily for you.

[32 : 01] And for me. He went there for his father. Jesus went there to glorify his father. And the father's goal in all things. The Bible tells us is to glorify his son.

God's agenda is for God's glory. It just so happens that God's glory is our greatest good as well. But you and me. Do you see?

We're on the perimeter. We're not in the center. Just as Copernicus had to realize that the earth is not in the center. But we orbit the sun.

So we need to realize we are not in the center of what God is doing in the world. We are not in the center of this big plan. And it's only when we start to realize that the things start to fall into place and make sense.

We're on the perimeter. God doesn't revolve around us. And God doesn't even need us. Just as the sun doesn't need the earth. The sun would be perfectly happy if the earth never existed.

[33 : 01] The other way around? Not at all. The earth needs the sun. God doesn't need you. We need to have this Copernican revolution.

We need to get this. We need to put ourselves in the right place in God's grand scheme of things.

God does not need you. And you know what? God doesn't even need you to believe in him.

Because God doesn't need to save you to be glorified. He can judge you and be just as glorified in that. Because it's just. And God will be glorified.

Because that is his goal. One way or the other. God will be glorified. Either in judgment. Or in rescue. Which means that every person who has ever lived will end up glorifying God one way or the other.

You just need to work out whether. You are going to be one of those who glorify him now. By following Jesus and living with him as the center. And everything else revolving around him.

[34 : 03] Or whether you are going to be one of the ones who keep yourself as the center. And try and make God revolve around you. And so glorify him in being rightly judged for such foolish rebellion.

Which one will you be? Will you be in the center? Or will God be in the center? Let's pray. Lord we thank you for revealing to Moses that he's not in the middle of things.

And we thank you that through what you did in Exodus you have revealed the same to us. We like to think of ourselves as the center of things.

And yet Lord it is good for us to know that we are not. And that you are. And that in so far as we make you the center we benefit from your glory.

And your salvation and all that Jesus has done for us. Lord we thank you for showing us that at the cross you have revealed yourself. In all your glory.

[35 : 05] Lord we pray that you would help us to focus on the cross. To know you. To trust in Christ. To follow him. To make Christ Jesus the center of our lives.

And then to show. To go into the world. And to show others who you are. By pointing them to the cross of Christ as well. And we pray that you would strengthen us to do this.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.