

The Story of Salvation: Exodus 1 – God’s Promised Redemption

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Why study Exodus? Let’s maybe think this way: Exodus, that’s Old Testament. It’s even the old Old Testament, way, way back at the beginning. Why don’t we just focus on the New Testament and all of that stuff? No, we interpret the Bible as a whole. It’s all the story of God. It’s all the story of God’s redemptive work in his world. And as we come to the book of Exodus, one of the reasons why we want to study it is because it is a foundational book for us to understand the rest of the Bible, for us to understand what so many things in the rest of the Bible are about.

Begin here in the book of Exodus, for example, concepts like redemption. Concepts like salvation, they have their beginnings here in the book of Exodus, as we see and so for us to understand not just those concepts, but to further to understand Jesus, to understand who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us, our understanding is it grows so much deeper as we go through the book of Exodus together. I’m going to suggest, and I’m hoping to hold myself to this, that Jesus is dripping off every page of the book of Exodus, that as we come to this book, that we think, well, that’s 1000’s of years before Jesus showed up. And yet he is, he is fully here, dripping from every page.

We want to see more of Jesus. We want to see what he has done for us. We want to understand more fully the story of salvation that we find here, laid out for us here in the book of Exodus, because this story is going to be woven through all the rest of the Bible. And so our understanding of the Bible really has its foundation here in this book. This morning, actually just one passage from Exodus, chapter 29 verse 45 gives us a hint of what this whole book is about.

This is God speaking. And he says: “I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God, and they shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”

What is Exodus about? Is it about it is about God. It is about God dwelling with his people. It is about God dwelling with his people who he has brought out of bondage here in Egypt, out of bondage to slavery to the Egyptians. For you and

for me, it's our bondage to sin that Jesus has rescued us from that God might dwell with you and me.

This morning, would you pray together with me? Father in heaven. Thank you for this your word. I pray that, as we hear it, read to us this morning, as we think about it for these next few minutes, I pray that we would be able to see more and more of Jesus, to see and to know Him and to rest more fully in Him, Lord, would you overwhelm us this morning with your beauty and your grace, with the good news of the gospel that drips from every page of your word? And so Lord, we pray that we might see maybe for the first time or be reminded once again of your dwelling with us, that you love us and you care for us, and that you have not forgotten your people, and it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

I want you to think about a time. Maybe it's right now. Maybe it's been in the past. Maybe it's a little thing that maybe you haven't thought too much about of God. "What are you doing in the world? God, do you even care about the world right now? You seem distant. You seem to not answer because you seem distant, and because you don't answer, maybe, God, I don't even know if you exist. I don't know if you're real." And you're wondering as you look around the world right now, as you go online, as you watch the news, as you get news brought to your phones or your computers, and you see all of the things happening, and you begin to scratch your head, and you begin to cry out and say, "God, where in the world are you? You? Do you care?"

And maybe it's not just the world out there, maybe it's simply in your own life. Maybe it's just you as you look at your own little world. God, do you care? Are you here? Do you listen? Are you present?"

If that's you, if that's ever been you, or if that's you here this morning, you find yourself in a place where the people of God probably were at the beginning of Exodus, because between the end of the book of Genesis and the beginning here of the book of Exodus has been hundreds of years. It's been hundreds of years, and the book of Exodus actually begins with the word. And now I know that that is not grammatically correct from those of you that are really good with the English language. Maybe you didn't grow up in the mountains of North Carolina, where sentences sometimes do begin with the word, and "G's" don't tend to go at the end of words. You'll think about that. It'll come to you in a minute.

The word begins with "and," or rather, the Exodus begins with the word, and to connect it with the book of Genesis, to say the story is still going. The story is still happening and so "and" is this conjunction that's saying, "Here's what happened in Genesis."

Now, when we left the book of Genesis, it seemed pretty bleak. God has made a promise. God had made a covenant with His people, He said to a man named

Abraham. Abraham means “father of many,” who was fatherless at the time when God says to him, “Abraham, I’ll be your God, and you’ll be my people, and you’re going to be the father of a great nation.”

And Abraham believes him. He believes God when he says that. And yet, it’s years before Abraham ever has a son, and in those years he’s kind of wondering and thinking, “Is this ever going to happen? Have you forgotten your promise? Is this true?” Abraham’s wife laughs at that idea, and God says to Abraham, “Go outside at night, take a look at the stars. Your descendants are going to be as many as the stars in the sky.” And Abraham believed that.

But what we see at the end of Genesis isn’t the full fulfillment of that. We see actually one small, dysfunctional family. We see that Abraham has a son named Isaac, and Isaac has a couple of sons. One of them is named Jacob, and that is Jacob, as to whom the promise goes to. Jacob has 12 sons. And those 12 sons, they’re going to take up a large section of the last part of the book of Genesis, because some of those sons say to the youngest son, “You’re Daddy’s favorite, let’s take him and let’s kill him.”

Then one of the sons, one of the brothers, says “No, no, no, let’s not kill him. Let’s just sell him into slavery, and we’ll tell dad he’s dead.” And they respond, “Oh, that’s a great idea. Let’s do that.”

And so that’s what they do. They sell Joseph to some traders who are on their way down to Egypt. And so Joseph gets taken into slavery in Egypt, and while he’s there, over the years, he actually rises to be the second most powerful man in all of Egypt through the work of the hand of God, so that he saves the Egyptians, because God tells him there is this famine coming.

They plan for the famine. And not only does he save Egypt, but also he saves his own family, because they go down to Egypt, and there’s this incredible exchange that happens where Joseph sees his brothers. They don’t know it’s him, but he knows it’s them, and he doesn’t tell them. And then they leave, and Joseph commands, “Hey, bring your other brother back. And they go and they bring him back.

Finally Joseph reveals to his brothers as to who he really is. And this family is reunited there in Egypt, there’s 70 of them in all, hardly a number “as the stars in the sky.” A family that’s always on edge, because the brothers that sold Joseph into slavery when their dad dies, they say, “Oh no. Now he’s going to get us. Oh no, now he’ll be coming for us. And so they do all kinds of things to try to work on this relationship - but here they are a small, dysfunctional family of shepherds who the Egyptians looked down upon. And so they send them to one part of Egypt. “You guys go over there and you just do your thing over there.” And now, for hundreds of years, it seems as though maybe God has forgotten. Maybe God isn’t at work. And if he is God, what in the world is He doing?

Which is now where Exodus picks up the story: “And these are the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob.”

And the book of Exodus lists those. And it really is a pointer back to Genesis chapter 46 where we saw the names of those who came to Egypt. But God's promise is still working. Though he might seem distant or silent, he is still working. Now we see in verse six, Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation, but the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly. They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. You see, for generation after generation, hundreds of years, what did they do? What did the Hebrews do? They married. They had children. They celebrated birthdays. They celebrated the weddings and anniversaries. They planted crops. They grew them. They grew and herded the sheep. They went through the seasons together. They watched the Nile rise and they watched The Niles go down as the rains came and went. They just went through life following God because they maintained their own identity. They did not intermarry with the Egyptians, but they maintained their distinctiveness as the people of God.

And what God is doing here is fulfilling that promise that he made to Abraham way back in Genesis. It's the mandate that was given at creation. There are so many different echoes of the book of Genesis in the book of Exodus, and we'll try to point many of them out as we go through the study together.

But here's the first one. “They were fruitful and increased greatly.” They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong. It's the mandate that God gave to Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and multiply. Rule over the earth and subdue it.” “Be fruitful and multiply” there at the beginning of creation, and the fall did not take that mandate away. Rather, we see the new creation beginning even here, as they take that mandate that God has given to them, and God is working and moving in his world to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

That is what we see in these first verses here in the book of Exodus. That it might just seem to us as, “Oh, it's just a bunch of names. Some are easy to pronounce, and some not so much. Let's see how the pastor does with those.” But in reality, what God is doing is he is fulfilling his promise, though it might not look like it, though it might look mundane, though it might just look like they just lived their normal life and kept their distinctive identity of the people of God, that was what they were called to. That was what God was doing, and he is doing that same thing, even today, even today in the things that we do when we celebrate birthdays, when we celebrate anniversaries, when we have weddings, when we go about the seasons, when we go to school, when we go to work when we do all of these things, what we need to remember is that God's redemptive work is happening even in the midst of what we look at and think that's just mundane, that God is building his church, that God is drawing his people to Himself, and though We might not like we might not see it.

The promise is no less true, but beginning at verse eight, something happens. Something happens that the book of Exodus tells us; that there is a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. Joseph had saved Egypt from that famine. And because of that, this family they had held in very high regard.

And now there is a new pharaoh, a pharaoh who perhaps represents a new family dynasty that has shown up. A new pharaoh dynasty, and for the pharaohs in Egypt, if you remember back to your world history class, the pharaohs in Egypt believed themselves to be gods. The people of Egypt believed them to be gods. Hence they are buried with all this elaborate treasure and buried in these elaborate coffins, because the people, along with the Pharaohs themselves, believed that they were gods.

And so this man who becomes the Pharaoh, you will notice that this Pharaoh is not named. It's not named on purpose.

He says, "You know these people, there are a lot of them. There are a lot of them now. And if they wise up and somebody attacks us and they join with them, they're going to overthrow us, and so they're going to leave. And so what do we do about that?"

What to do about these people, that for hundreds of years, were simply living their lives and in many ways, were seen as an asset to the Egyptians?

Now they're no longer an asset, but they are a threat. They're a threat to them because the Pharaoh had no memory of who Joseph was or what Joseph had done. And so what we see is a spiritual confrontation. The Pharaoh represents this spiritual battle that is going on. As one pastor wrote; the Pharaoh is very much a picture of man in rebellion against God Himself. Pharaoh is a picture of mankind in rebellion against God, and there is this great spiritual battle that is unfolding. The Israelites, the Hebrew people, were just going through life. They didn't see it happening. And yet it did.

And so the Pharaoh is thinking: "I'm the god of this world. I'm afraid of you. Let's make life tough." And so it starts off in opposition to these people, the people of God, and they say, Let's make them build things. I mean, they're just farmers. They herd sheep. Let's put them to work building store cities. And when that doesn't work, (because, you'll notice, there's kind of a refrain that keeps happening. They keep growing. They keep having children).

The Pharaoh reasons, "If we make life really bad for them, they'll wise up and begin to ask themselves, "why would we bring children into a world like this?" It'll be so difficult for them, they won't want to have kids - and so they'll just shrink away.

And yet it tells us they kept having kids, and so when that didn't work, while they're building these store cities now, they become even harsher. They put them into slavery, they beat them. And when that doesn't work, it gets even worse. The Pharaoh says to two midwives, women who help deliver children who are both named, (they're both named because they do what is right in God's eyes, unlike the Pharaoh, who is unnamed). These two women are remembered thousands of years later, because we're talking about them here in 2025 because they did what was right in the eyes of God.

The Pharaoh called these women, who were probably the managers of the midwives, and said, "Okay, if, when you go to the Hebrew women, if they have a boy before you take it and put that boy in his mother's arms, kill him. If it's a girl, go ahead, but kill the boys, because the boys will rise and will grow and will one day fight against us." That was his fear.

But the midwives don't do that. And then, who knows how long later, it could have been years later where the Pharaoh is seeing all these little boys of the Hebrews run around: "I thought I told you to get rid of them."

And the response they give is actually hilarious. Oh, Pharaoh, those Hebrew women, they're not like the Egyptian women, because they just pop those children out before we get there. They are vigorous. They are just really good at birthing.

And so he takes it to one more step. He doesn't just say to the midwives, he now tells all of the people. In verse 22 he commanded all of his people, "Every son born to the Hebrews, you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

Infanticide, murder, craziness. What does it show us? What does it teach us? It shows us, and it teaches us that the world is not neutral to the plan of God, rather the world is in opposition to God's work and his redemption in the world.

As we see, the Pharaoh is thought of as a God-like figure, and the spiritual battle is ongoing. One pastor said that the salvation promised by God is not greeted by a waiting world, but opposed with hysterical fanaticism, which borders on madness. Another pastor said that we must reckon with the fact that God's redemptive purpose and action will be utterly or relentlessly opposed through all of history to the very end.

God's work of redemption, even today, will be opposed by the world, and yet God has overcome it. God will even work through it, as we'll see next week, the very edict that the Pharaoh gives to throw the boys into the Nile is going to be the very means by which the one who will take the people out of Egypt, the very thing that he fears, that very thing will begin to happen because of the edict that he gave.

God is laughing at Pharaoh as we come to Egypt, or to Exodus, because God has everything under his control, because there would be one who would come, who would also be opposed. Remember, Exodus is pointing us to Jesus, who was also opposed by those around him, by those who wanted to destroy him, by those even when he was born.

This foreshadows what happens when the rulers there outside of Bethlehem said, "We need to kill all the baby boys, because one is coming, whom I've been told about, who will be the king. But wait, I'm the king."

And that spiritual battle was still ongoing thousands of years later, and it is still ongoing today. And here's the thing: Jesus has won!

Jesus has won, and God is doing His work of redemption, even when it looks like, even when it feels like nothing is happening or, perhaps worse, when it feels like and it looks like that God is losing because when we come to the end of Exodus one, it looks pretty bleak. It looks like God is losing and yet God has everything under his control, and his redemption is going to happen, and he is going to use even those things, even those things that you don't see, the things that you look at and you say, "I don't even understand what is happening. How can any good come of this?"

Whatever this might be for you, God is using that to make you more and more like Jesus and to bring about his redemptive purpose here in the world, and that's what we have to celebrate as we come now to the Lord's table. We have here that very reminder of his presence and of His covenant with us, His grace to us, that we'll think about as we come now to the Lord's table in these next few moments.

So let me pray for us this morning:

Father in heaven. We, thank you for this Your Word. We thank you for what it teaches us, Lord. We thank you that you are a God who is working and moving in the midst of all things that the plans of man have not thwarted a single plan of yours. So Lord, we give you our thanks and we give you our praise, and we pray that you might help us to rest in who you are, to rest in what you have done, to rest fully and completely in the Gospel of Jesus. Lord, as we go through this study of Exodus together, would you just help us to see Jesus in it, to grow in our love for Him?

Perhaps we are here this morning, and we're new to church. We're new to Christianity. We really don't know what any of this means. Lord, I pray that you would reveal yourself through this time in your Word to those that might not yet believe in you, that they might come to believe and to see you in all of your glory and what you have done. And so Lord, would you help us? Would you prepare

our hearts now, as we prepare to come to this your table, to celebrate what you have done for us?

We pray all this in Jesus name amen. Amen, amen.

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