

Exodus 1

- Arguably, the best known Biblical story is that of Moses leading the nation of Israel out of Egypt
 - The exodus is a literal, historical account of God orchestrating miraculous and important events in the course of fulfilling His promises
 - The book was written by Moses, a fact every New Testament author and even Jesus Himself testified
 - The events of the book took place in the 16th–15th centuries BC, and cover a little more than 215 years of time
 - Moses relates the story as an eyewitness account of historical events
 - Throughout its history Israel has always considered the story to be historical fact
 - Later writers in scripture refer back to the story of Israel leaving Egypt, meeting the Lord at the mountain and entering the period of desert wandering as a literal account
 - Stephen in Acts 7 recounts the story of Israel including a literal Exodus
 - Jesus Himself spoke of God's appearance to Moses and the giving of the Law as a literal account
 - The New Testament letter authors included many references to the book of Exodus
 - Only Psalms and Isaiah are quoted more than the book of Exodus
 - A literal understanding of this book gives added power and significance to the prophetic pictures embedded into the storyline of Exodus
 - The Exodus story is incredibly rich in pictures of sin, redemption, baptism, the Kingdom and judgment
 - Exodus is especially rich in pictures of Christ and His redemptive work
 - Above all, the story of Exodus is a story of God's sovereignty to accomplish His purposes in and through the lives of men

- Eugene Merrill called Exodus the “most significant historical and theological event of the Old Testament”
- Like any book of Scripture, a proper understanding of Exodus depends on our knowledge of scripture overall (and to some degree on our familiarity with ancient history and culture)
 - So as we study this account, we’ll take time in places to examine other Biblical texts, particularly Genesis, and the historical events of the period
 - Even a cursory glance at the book of Exodus will demonstrate a clear dependence on the earlier book of Genesis
 - For example, in the opening verses of Chapter 1, we’ll find immediate references to the story of Joseph
 - For that matter, the entire story of the Exodus is made necessary because of events in Genesis
 - Some of which we’ll study tonight
 - There are six parts to the book
 - Part I (Chapters 1-4) is the call of Moses
 - Part II (Chapters 5-11) is God’s demonstration of His power
 - Part III (Chapter 12-15) is the exodus
 - Part IV (Chapters 16-31) is the giving of the Law
 - Part V (Chapters 32-34) is the breaking and renewing of the covenant
 - Part VI (Chapters 35-40) is the construction of the tabernacle
 - Regarding the historical background of Egypt, we will spend time tonight learning a little history of Egypt leading up to the Exodus
 - We want to understand some of the politics of the Egypt that welcomed Joseph and enslaved his relatives
 - In coming weeks, we’ll study considerably more Egyptian history and culture

- First, we'll start in Chapter 1 learning some important Jewish history

[Ex. 1:1](#) Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household:

[Ex. 1:2](#) Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah;

[Ex. 1:3](#) Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin;

[Ex. 1:4](#) Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

[Ex. 1:5](#) All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt.

[Ex. 1:6](#) Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.

[Ex. 1:7](#) But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

- Moses, the author of Exodus, recounts the history of Israel entering into the land of Egypt
 - Moses is referring back to the story he originally told in Genesis 46
 - According to Genesis 46, Israel left Canaan and brought all his descendants with him
 - His family included his 11 sons (not counting Joseph who was already living in Egypt)
 - Jacob's grandsons and granddaughters were also included
 - According to v.5, Israel's family numbered 70 altogether
 - In Genesis 46:26 we hear this:

[Gen. 46:26](#) All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all,

[Gen. 46:27](#) and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.

- All the decedents of Jacob were 66, but then we read in the next verse that all the persons of Jacob's house were 70, like Exodus 1
 - The difference is simple and Moses makes clear why the numbers are different
 - In v.26 he is describing all those who are descended from Jacob and came to Egypt in response to Joseph's call

- That number excludes Jacob himself (he isn't descended from himself) and it excludes Joseph's family (who were already in Egypt)
 - The second number (70) is a description of all the persons of Jacob's house
 - This number would include Jacob and Joseph's family
 - Since Joseph had two sons by this time, the difference between the two descriptions is four people
 - Later in Acts, Stephen describes the family of Jacob as having 75 persons in all
 - His number includes the five grandsons of Joseph born to Manasseh and Ephraim
- As you may remember, Joseph's story was central to how the nation of Israel ended up in Egypt
 - Joseph was sold into bondage by his brothers in Genesis 37
 - Later Joseph rises to power as the second most powerful man in charge in Egypt
 - And during a time of famine, the sons of Jacob come seeking relief in Egypt and meet Joseph, the son they sold into bondage
 - Ultimately, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and invites them all to live in Egypt under the protection of Pharaoh
 - That's a short recap of HOW God brought Israel into Egypt, but it doesn't answer the question of WHY God did this to Israel
 - Why did God cause Israel to leave Canaan and dwell in a foreign land?
 - Why did God allow Israel to become enslaved there?
- The answer for why Israel, comes in two parts
 - The first part of the answer is found much earlier than the story of Joseph...all the way back in the story of Noah in Genesis 9
 - After the flood, Noah and his three sons exit the Ark and are camped somewhere near the Ark

- One night Noah drinks too much and ends up naked in his tent
- One of his sons, Ham, enters the tent and finds his father naked
 - Later he tells his brothers what he found and takes pleasure in sharing the story of his father's shame
 - Noah's other sons act properly, covering their father's shame without looking upon his nakedness
- When Noah discovers that Ham had treated him with contempt, Noah is stirred to pronounce a prophetic judgment
 - In reality, Noah's pronouncement was a judgment God Himself inspired for His eternal purposes
 - Since all three sons of Noah were God-fearing, Noah doesn't condemn Ham directly
- Instead, Noah condemns Ham's son, Canaan

[Gen. 9:24](#) When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.

[Gen. 9:25](#) So he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.”

- With those words, Noah condemned the entire line of Canaan to destruction
 - The Hebrew word for cursed is *arar*, which means to bring to an end
 - So the line of Canaan must come to an end, according to God's prophetic word spoken by Noah
- Now flash forward 360 years to the story of Abraham
 - God first promised that Israel would enter Egypt when He made His covenant with Abraham

[Gen. 15:12](#) Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

[Gen. 15:13](#) God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.

[Gen. 15:14](#) “But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

[Gen. 15:15](#) “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.

[Gen. 15:16](#) “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

- The Lord told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not their own for 400 years
 - Furthermore, they would be enslaved and oppressed for a time in that foreign land
 - At the end of this period, God would judge the nation that oppressed Israel
 - God promised Abraham that the nation that blesses Israel will be blessed, while the nation that curses Israel will be cursed
 - When Egypt was friendly to Israel, the nation of Egypt prospered
 - When Egypt turned against Israel, they eventually met judgment by the hand of God
 - In the fourth generation, Israel would return to Canaan
 - Four generations later – Abraham’s great, great grandchildren – would return to Canaan to receive a land God had set aside for them
- In v.16 God gives Abraham one of the reasons why his descendants must go to Egypt for this time, and the answer is connected to the curse on Canaan
 - God tells Abraham that the iniquity or the sin of the Amorite is not yet complete
 - The term “Amorite” is a generic term referring to all the “ites” living in Canaan...all the Canaanite people
 - God says the Canaanites had not yet reached the point where their sin was complete or full
 - We must interpret the meaning of the term “full” by the context of God’s covenant with Abraham

- God is not suggesting that the Canaanites' sin was insufficient to warrant God bringing eternal judgment for their sin
 - Just one sin is sufficient to warrant God's judgment
 - Only by His grace does any man remain alive even one day
 - And all men who die in their sins will be judged
- Therefore, God isn't talking about an eternal judgment moment, though certainly all the Canaanite people faced judgment when they died
 - Instead, God was talking about the moment they encountered an earthly judgment
 - The destruction of the Canaanite people and their removal from the land in keeping with Noah's prophecy
 - God is saying that the time for their removal from the land had not yet arrived
 - Therefore the Canaanite people still had more time left to sin in the land prior to their removal
- Some commentators have concluded that God meant he was giving the Canaanites more time to repent
 - This can't be the proper interpretation either
 - According to the Bible, the repentance that leads to God's forgiveness and to salvation is something granted by God
 - It is not something men arrive at by themselves in the course of time

[Acts 11:18](#) When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has **granted** to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

[2Cor. 7:10](#) For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- So God isn't delaying because God wanted to give them time to repent
 - According to the curse God spoke through Noah, there would be no granting of repentance for the Canaanite people

- Once God pronounces a curse, His word is fast and sure and cannot be changed
- So why is God waiting to bring the earthly judgment He promised for the Canaanite people and give the land to Israel?
 - The answer is God determined that the sinful Canaanite people would receive judgment at the hands of the Jewish people
 - Abraham's descendants were appointed to conquer the Canaanite people living in the land
 - Under Joshua, they would wipe them out, erase their memory and displace them forever
 - But at the point God reveals this plan to Abraham, Israel isn't even a nation as yet
 - The nation grows slowly at first
 - Even though 175 years have passed, the nation consists of only a dozen people
 - And as Israel follows Joseph into Egypt in the beginning of the Exodus, there are still only 70 members in the household
 - While God is capable of defeating any people, nevertheless 70 men, women and children are hardly enough to occupy and care for the land
 - So God tells Abraham that a period of 400 years must pass before the nation of Israel will be numerous enough to occupy and hold the land God will give them
- So the first reason God sends Israel into Egypt is to multiply them in a fertile land where Israel would prosper
 - Chapter 1 of Exodus tells us the story of Israel multiplying
 - Notice in vs.6-7 that after Joseph and his brothers die in Egypt, the nation of Israel remains fruitful and increases greatly
 - In fact, in that verse there is a repetition of the increase to add emphasis
 - Fruitful, increased greatly, and exceedingly mighty, the land of Goshen was filled with them

- So Israel was living in the fertile valley of Goshen, where the Pharaoh assigned them to live
- But why did God want Israel to incubate in a foreign land, and more specifically why did Israel need to be enslaved during that time?
 - The second reason also comes from Genesis 38, from the story of Judah
 - As we noted earlier tonight, the story of Joseph begins in Chapter 37 with his descent into Egypt
 - And then Joseph's story picks up again in Chapter 39 in the house of Potiphar
 - Interrupting Joseph's story is a single chapter telling the story of Judah and Tamar
 - Time doesn't permit me to recount the entire chapter in detail – it's worth your time to read it – but we can summarize it quickly
 - Judah is a son of Jacob who takes a wife from among the Canaanite people
 - The sons of this marriage are evil and the Lord kills both of them
 - Later God permits Judah to have children through his widowed daughter-in-law, a Jewish woman
- In the story of Judah, we learn two important details
 - For the first time the children of Israel had begun to marry outside their family and to take wives from among the cursed Canaanite people
 - None of the patriarchs dared to do this before, since God had commanded them to remain separate from the Canaanite people
 - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob took wives from their family in Haran
 - But the Canaanites were a cursed people according to Noah
 - So if a member of Israel intermarried with Canaanites, then their children would be cursed as well
 - Consequently when Judah marries a Canaanite woman and has two sons, both his sons were evil in the sight of the Lord

- And the Lord put them to death
- Therefore, Judah's choice to marry a Canaanite threatened the very survival of the nation of Israel
 - If his brothers followed suit, every tribe of Israel might fall under the curse
 - God must act to prevent this sin from spreading
- Even more importantly, Judah was the tribe carrying the seed promise God delivered to Abraham
 - Paul explains in Galatians that the Seed promise God gave Abraham was a reference to the coming Messiah
 - Through one line of Abraham, God would bring the One Who would be sent into the world to bless Israel and all the nations
 - That seed promise was inherited by one child in each generation
 - It moved from Abraham to Isaac (not Ishmael) then to Jacob (not Esau)
 - In Chapter 38 of Genesis we learn that God intended the seed promise to follow into the line of Judah
 - Judah's line would ultimately produce the Messiah
 - Yet in Chapter 38 we find Judah attempting to intermarry with Canaanites, which would have brought an end to God's promise
 - Immediately, we recognize the problem with the nation of Israel waiting out their 400 years while living in the land of Canaan
 - Had God left them in Canaan, the nation of Israel will have become Canaanites through intermarriage
 - Even more distressing, the line of the Messiah will be polluted by intermarrying with the line of the Canaanites
 - God's entire plan for Israel and the Canaanites and the Messiah would be disrupted
- So the second reason the Lord moved Israel into Egypt was to protect them from the intermarriage that was taking place in Canaanites

- The story of Judah interrupts the story of Joseph to explain why God was working to place Joseph and his family in Egypt
 - The nation needed to leave Canaan until they were strong enough to return and defeat the people
 - And in the meantime, they must be removed from the temptation to intermarry with the Canaanites
- God goes a couple steps further to protect the nation of Israel
 - First, he isolated them from the Egyptians during their initial years in Egypt
 - They lived in Goshen, which was a remote corner of the nation unfrequented by Egyptians
 - Secondly, God also determined that Israel would become slaves in Egypt
 - As slaves, Israel was precluded from marrying with the Egyptian culture whatsoever
- So to the question why did God send Israel to Egypt, the answers are:
 - To give time for the nation to grow large enough to defeat Canaan and take possession of the land
 - To separate them from the possibility of intermarrying with other nations while they waited
 - Later God codifies the nation's separation from the world through the giving of a Law that precludes the nation from mixing with Gentiles
- Looking back at Chapter 1, we noted that the nation of Israel grew and prospered while they lived in Goshen, just as God intended
 - And at a point, God moves to bring Israel from being a privileged people in Egypt to slaves
 - Beginning in the next verse

Ex. 1:8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

- Egypt now has a new Pharaoh who didn't know Joseph

- At first glance this is an odd statement, when you consider how prominent Joseph must have been
 - A Pharaoh was usually the son of a previous Pharaoh, so how could a new Pharaoh arise that would not know Joseph?
 - We should expect that the story of Joseph would have been handed down and known from generation to generation
 - After all, we're still talking about him today
- The answer is that a regime change has occurred in Egypt
 - To understand this situation, we need a little history lesson on Egypt
- When Joseph came to Egypt, he entered the land during the 16th dynasty
 - The 13th–17th dynasties were ruled by a people called the Hyksos
 - These people were not Egyptians but foreigners from the region of Haran in the Fertile Crescent
 - They conquered the Egyptians in 1670 BC
 - The Hyksos were Semitic people, descended from Noah's son Shem
 - They shared the same family origins as the Hebrew people
 - But the people of Egypt were Hamites, descended from Noah's son Ham
 - So these Semites were the rulers over Egypt but they themselves were not Egyptians
 - The Egyptians hated the Hyksos conquerers and Semites in general
 - Naturally, the Hyksos themselves were welcoming to other Semite people who desired to immigrate into Egypt
 - The presence of other Semites in the land helped strengthen the Hyksos' rule over the native Egyptian people

- This explains why Joseph was elevated into power by the Hyksos Pharaoh
- As a fellow Semite, Joseph was a welcome ally to the Hyksos ruler
- Furthermore, when the Pharaoh learned that Joseph had more family in Canaan, the Pharaoh immediately welcomed them to immigrate
 - Joseph knew that native Egyptians would not have received his family warmly, so he suggests that Pharaoh give his family a remote corner of Egypt called Goshen
 - Here we see the way God ensured that Israel remained separate from the Egyptians while living in the land
- Eventually, the Hyksos reign came to an end
 - The 17th dynasty was overthrown by an Egyptian called Ahmose, who established himself as Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty
 - Ahmose was a Hamite, a native Egyptian, so he restored Egypt to Egyptian rule
 - He came to power in 1570 BC
 - This is the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph mentioned in v.8
 - He was ignorant of Joseph because he was not a descendant of the previous line of Pharaohs
 - Instead, he represented a new dynasty or house of rule, one that had no connection to past dynasties and its allies
 - The 18th dynasty is considered the height of Egyptian power
 - This was the first dynasty where kings called themselves Pharaoh
 - The new dynasty's arrival resulted in an immediate change in the prospects for a semite living in Egypt
 - Ahmose's forces killed or ran out of town any Semites in the previous dynasty
 - Those that remained in the land were enslaved

- This was the fate experienced by Joseph's descendants as fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham

Ex. 1:9 He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we.

Ex. 1:10 "Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."

Ex. 1:11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.

Ex. 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.

Ex. 1:13 The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously;

Ex. 1:14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

- Pharaoh Ahmose tells the Egyptians they had reason to fear the Hebrews
 - In v.9, our English translation does not serve us well
 - It says that the Hebrews are more and mightier than the Egyptians
 - But Israel didn't outnumber all Egyptians
 - The correct Hebrew translation would read "Israel is too numerous and mighty"
 - Ahmose is concerned that with so many Semites still living in the land, his rule is threatened
 - Ahmose appoints taskmasters over them, enslaving them in hard labor
 - The work of the Jews was responsible for creating important Egyptian cities, including Raamses and Pithom, also called Heliopolis
- Though the labor of the Hebrews was certainly beneficial to Ahmose, his primary motivation for enslaving them wasn't to get free labor
 - His main concern was in stopping the growth of the people
 - Usually, hard slave labor will decrease the strength of a people and reduce their number
 - Ahmose wanted to wear the Hebrews down to nothing

- Yet in v.12 we're told that his strategy didn't work
 - Against all logic, the nation continued to grow in the face of the persecution and hardship
 - The number of Hebrews were so numerous and vigorous that they caused dread for the Egyptians
 - And the harder the Egyptians punished the nation with hard labor, the heartier they grew
 - This is exactly as God intended it to be
 - In their weakness, God's strength was shown to the Egyptians
 - And in persecution, God grows His people
- The New Testament echoes this truth in several ways
 - First, we see church history repeat this pattern
 - Whenever the church has suffered under the worst persecution, it has grown the fastest
 - And that growth has always been of the best kind
 - The church grew among committed disciples who faced persecution with courage speaking openly about Jesus in the face of great trials
 - The weakness evident in the Western church today is probably related to our comfortable circumstances
 - Secondly, the New Testament calls every Christian to rejoice in trials and persecutions knowing these tests will produce greater strength in our personal faith and walk

[James 1:2](#) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

[James 1:3](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

[James 1:4](#) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Like the nation of Israel as a whole, we can expect to see unexplainable growth in the face of trials that we might expect to crush us

- It's in the moments when our strength fades that God's power shines through us
- Another 25 years pass and Ahmose dies, so his son, Amenhotep I, decides to try a new tactic to stem the growing population of Hebrews

Ex. 1:15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah;

Ex. 1:16 and he said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."

Ex. 1:17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.

Ex. 1:18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?"

Ex. 1:19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them."

Ex. 1:20 So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty.

Ex. 1:21 Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.

- Amenhotep gives direction to the head midwives of Israel to begin killing all male children at birth
 - These women would have passed this instruction on to the rest of the midwives who served Jewish mothers
 - Their names were Semite names, so they were likely Semite slaves themselves, though not Jewish
 - The plan was to make it look as though the children died at childbirth
 - In that day Jews counted ethnicity through the father
 - You were a Jew if your father was a Jew
 - So if the nation lost a generation of boys, then the girls would have married Egyptian men
 - And the next generation would have been considered Egyptian
 - Like with the Canaanites, the nation would have been slowly destroyed by assimilation

- As before with Judah, God intervened to protect the integrity of the nation of Israel
 - He ensures these women were God-fearing and unwilling to obey the Pharaoh's instructions
 - When Pharaoh realized that young Jewish boys were still running around, the midwives give an excuse
 - Jewish women are vigorous and give birth before midwives can intervene
 - It's a lie but one intended to protect God's people in the face of a greater sin, similar to the choice Rahab faced
 - And as a reward, God establishes a household for them
 - Meaning he gives them husbands and families as rewards for their faithfulness
- Like his father, Amenhotep's plan failed to destroy the people of Israel