

Exodus 2

- The nation of Israel is held in bondage in Egypt
 - God is growing them into a people who will inherit the land God has promised to them
 - He placed them in Egypt to keep the nation from intermarrying with the Canaanites during this period of incubation
 - And now the Lord has allowed Israel to become slaves in Egypt to protect them from intermarrying with Egyptians as well
 - Meanwhile, the Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty are intent on destroying the Semites of Israel
 - Their hatred of the Jewish people stems in part from Egypt's recent history of Semitic conquerors who ruled Egypt in the 13th-17th Dynasties
 - But it also comes from the threat the large and growing nation of Israel poses to the rule of the Pharaoh
 - It's as if another nation were growing inside the nation of Egypt, threatening to displace the native people
 - So first the Pharaoh Ahmose and later his son Amenhotep I tried to weaken the nation through harsh labor
 - But God supernaturally preserved the nation of Israel during this time
 - Even in their trials and difficulties, they still grew and prospered as a nation
 - This frustrated the Pharaohs to no end
 - And it led to even harsher tactics in an attempt to stop the nation's growth
- At the end of Chapter 1, Amenhotep I sought to kill all male children in a surreptitious manner using midwives to take the child's life unbeknownst to the mothers
 - When the midwives failed to cooperate, the plan failed, so Amenhotep takes an even bolder step

Ex. 1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive.”

- Amenhotep I decrees that the Egyptians themselves were commissioned to kill Hebrew male children
 - The nature of the death would be drowning by throwing them into the Nile river
 - Why would the people of Egypt be willing to participate in such a plan?
 - Since the Nile River was itself considered to be a god, the people were probably told the river god required these children as a sacrifice
 - In any case, the Pharaoh’s plan is a last attempt to stop the Jewish growth
 - We don’t know how many Hebrew boys were killed in this way, but we can conclude that it had little effect on the overall population growth of Israel
 - When Israel finally leaves Egypt, it is several million strong
 - And it reaches this number after only a few generations
 - The Lord continued to bless the nation with great growth despite the enemy’s efforts to halt it
- This final verse of Chapter 1 leads us directly into the story of Moses

Ex. 2:1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.

Ex. 2:2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.

Ex. 2:3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

Ex. 2:4 His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

- The story of Moses begins with a mention of his parents
 - They are not named here, though we finally get their names in Exodus 6
 - Both his parents are of the tribe of Levi

- In fact, Moses' father married his own aunt, which was permitted in that day
- In v.2 the mother gives birth to a son, and immediately she notices something unique about this boy
 - The text says he was beautiful, but the word in Hebrew is *tov*, which has a wide variety of meanings
 - It usually means good or beautiful or favorable, but it can also mean worthy or pleasing, as in pleasing in the sight of the Lord
 - We know every mother thinks her own son to be beautiful, so this can't be the only reason she felt the need to hide her son
 - Perhaps other Jewish mothers tried to hide their children as well
 - But the meaning of the verse is that Moses' mother had faith in God that her son was special to His plan in some way
- Hebrews tells us this:

[Heb. 11:23](#) By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

- Josephus wrote that Moses' father had been given a revelation from God that Moses would humble the Egyptians
 - We don't know if this report is true or not
- After three months, Moses' mother resorts to a desperate act to save her son's life
 - She places him in a basket (or ark) and waterproofs it with pitch
 - After placing the child in the ark, she sets it afloat on the Nile
 - It's ironic that Moses' mother tried to save her child by placing him in the Nile, since the Pharaoh's command was that male children be tossed in the Nile
 - We don't know what she expected to happen to the baby, but she must have hoped some Egyptian would claim the child
 - She would rather the child live with another woman than die with her

- Moses' sister, Miriam, stands at a distance to watch what may happen to her baby brother
 - Perhaps the mother couldn't bear to watch herself
 - So she has Moses' sister report back to her mother what happens
- Even at this early point in the story, we see a couple of important themes of Exodus emerging
 - First, Exodus is a story of God's sovereignty
 - We've already reflected on God's sovereignty in how Israel ended up in Egypt and in slavery
 - God was working even from the days of Noah and then later in the covenant of Abraham to prepare a place for Israel
 - But He sends them to Egypt for a time to ensure they were ready to inherit the land
 - And then He holds Israel in slavery to ensure the integrity of the nation while they grew
 - Now we see God beginning the work of bringing Israel out of slavery
 - The first step is the preparation of a deliverer
 - God intends to raise up a man of prominence and stature among the Hebrews, a man who can humble the Egyptians
 - But how will God do this while Israel is in slavery?
 - The answer comes in the form of the edict of Amenhotep I
 - The decree that all males should die forces Moses' mother to give him up to become an Egyptian
 - In that way, God ensures that Moses will enjoy the best of Egypt during his upbringing
 - And this upbringing uniquely prepares him to serve in the role God has appointed
 - We'll see much more of this theme in Exodus

- Closely connected to the first theme is a second major theme of Moses as a picture of Christ
 - Just as Jesus is the Deliverer Who will lead Israel out of the slavery of sin, so will Moses be a lesser form of deliverer for the nation
 - The story of Moses begins in a similar manner to the story of Jesus
 - Like Moses, Jesus is born of humble circumstances to godly parents
 - And like Moses, Jesus was saved from a ruler intent on destroying male children
 - You may remember that Jesus was an infant when King Herod heard the prophecy that the Messiah had been born to Israel
 - He was worried that this king might displace him on the throne of Israel, so asked the magi to tell him where the child was
 - When the magi tricked Herod, he responded by trying to kill all the male children in Bethlehem
 - God warns Joseph through an angel telling him to take Jesus to Egypt
 - Later, Matthew refers to this connection in his gospel

[Matt. 2:14](#) So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

[Matt. 2:15](#) He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

- Matthew quotes from Hosea 11 in drawing the connection between Jesus and Moses
 - When we look at Hosea 11:1 we find this:

[Hos. 11:1](#) When Israel was a youth I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.

- In Hosea, Israel is called God's son

- Later in the Exodus story, God tells Pharaoh that the Lord will take his firstborn son since Egypt has refused to release God's son, Israel
- But Matthew makes a broader application of Hosea's prophecy, creating a connection between Moses and Jesus
 - Just as Moses began life as an infant raised in Egypt, similarly God's son – Israel's deliverer – began his early years in Egypt
 - This early connection is intended to alert us to the broader comparison between Moses and Jesus
 - Therefore, Moses is a shadow of Jesus

Ex. 2:5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her.

Ex. 2:6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Ex. 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?"

Ex. 2:8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

Ex. 2:9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

Ex. 2:10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

- Since it's God's plan to see Moses set afloat in the Nile, naturally God has prepared the perfect person to receive the child
 - The daughter of the Pharaoh was bathing in the Nile, which was a common practice
 - The daughter is a woman called Hatshepsut
 - Hatshepsut becomes a key player in the story of Exodus
 - Understanding Hatshepsut's role in Egypt and in the story of Moses is important and worth a few minutes of Egyptian history
 - Hatshepsut's is the daughter of Thutmose I, the son of Amenhotep I

- At the time she finds Moses, Hatshepsut's father, Thutmose I, has just inherited the throne and begun to rule
 - Later her father will take a second wife and father a male heir
- Moses's sister observes Hatshepsut claim Moses from the river
 - This brave girl has the presence of mind to approach Pharaoh's daughter offering to find a Hebrew woman capable of nursing the baby
 - Clearly, Pharaoh's daughter would not have had milk to feed the infant, so she was open to this offer
 - And Miriam knew exactly who to find...Moses' own mother
 - Hatshepsut hires Moses' mother to nurse and care for the child, a perfect result
 - In fact, in those days mothers typically nursed a child until its fifth birthday
 - So Moses' mother will have the benefit of raising Moses until his fifth birthday
 - During these years, she would have been able to impress upon Moses his Jewish roots, a foundation that will be important to Moses later in life
- In v. 10 Pharaoh's daughter names Moses
 - His name in Hebrew is Mosheh, which is actually an Egyptian word
 - Members of an Egyptian dynasty took their names from the dynasty family name
 - The name was usually a combination of the dynasty family name plus a prefix taken from an Egyptian god
 - So the family name of the 18th dynasty was Mosheh (or mose)
 - Notice that the first ruler in this dynasty period was Ahmose
 - And the current Pharaoh is Thutmose I
 - So Moses was probably given a longer name at this point
 - We don't know what the first part of his name was, but it was probably the name of the Nile river god

- This would explain why Hatshepsut says Moses' name was a reminder that he was taken from the river
- Interestingly, the word *mosheh* in Hebrew has become a pun
 - It is similar to another Hebrew word, *mashah*, which means to draw water
- Now the story of Moses jumps forward from his birth to a moment 40 years later

Ex. 2:11 Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

Ex. 2:12 So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

- In v.11 we're told that Moses went out to his brethren, meaning the Hebrew slaves
 - He's there to observe or take notice of their hard labors
 - While there he notices an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrews
 - At this point, Moses decides to act in defense of the Hebrew
 - He first makes sure that no Egyptian is watching
 - Then when the coast is clear, Moses kills the Egyptian taskmaster and buries him in the sand
 - This scene raises more questions that it answers
 - Moses could have visited the Hebrew slaves any day in his first forty years
 - And if he had made such a visit, he probably would have seen this same scene play out many times
 - An Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew
 - This had been happening for many years
 - So why does Moses take this action at this point?
- Two places in the New Testament help fill in the gaps to explain Moses' behavior

[Heb. 11:24](#) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
[Heb. 11:25](#) choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,
[Heb. 11:26](#) considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

- Hebrews says that Moses reached a point when, by faith, he repudiated his identity as a son of Pharaoh's daughter
 - This decision carried significant implications for him, of course
 - It meant setting aside a life of power and comfort in the Pharaoh's house
 - He would no longer have access to the wealth of Egypt and the fine living it provided
 - This is probably the moment when Moses dropped the first part of his name, the part referring to the Egyptian god of the Nile
 - By dropping the Egyptian god, Moses was declaring himself to be a follower of the Hebrew God
 - In this way, Moses chose to be associated with the Hebrew people
 - He would endure ill-treatment in his new identity
 - Notice the language the Hebrew writer uses to compare the two lives
 - Living in the way of the Egyptian society was enjoying the passing pleasures of sin
 - While enduring the suffering of the Hebrews was sharing in the reproach of Christ
 - Why did Moses take this step?
 - Hebrews says Moses' decision was a matter of faith, in that Moses recognizes that the eternal reward for God's people was a much greater prize than anything Egypt could offer
 - But what caused Moses to come to this understanding? Why did he wait until he was nearly forty years old to make this move?

- These events happen when Moses is nearly 40 years old, and around this time, Moses' adopted mother, Hatshepsut, dies
 - Here again, we need a little Egyptian political history to appreciate everything happening at this point in Moses' life
 - Thutmose I begins to rule in 1525 BC
 - Interestingly, Thutmose I is not the son of Amenhotep I
 - Amenhotep dies childless
 - But Amenhotep's sister was married, and her husband becomes the next Pharaoh
 - So Thutmose I is the brother-in-law of Amenhotep I
 - Thutmose I had a daughter by his first wife, Hatshepsut
 - To gain a male heir, he took a second wife
 - This son becomes Pharaoh Thutmose II
 - Thutmose II eventually becomes Pharaoh and sires a male heir, Thutmose III
 - When Thutmose II dies unexpectedly in 1504 BC, his son, Thutmose III inherited the throne
 - But at the time of his father's death, Thutmose III was very young, just a small child
 - So his aunt, Hatshepsut, seized the opportunity to take control of the throne of Egypt
 - In reality, Hatshepsut was the Pharaoh of Egypt
 - She was an unusually strong woman in a male-dominated culture
 - Queen Hatshepsut adopted certain male mannerisms to minimize objections to her rule including the wearing of a false beard that appears on some Egyptian pictures of her (Constable)
- Queen Hatshepsut reigned Egypt until her death in 1485 BC
 - So long as Hatshepsut was alive, her nephew Thutmose III remained in the shadows unable to consolidate his power

- She controlled the power centers of Egypt and ensured that the ruling class and military of Egypt remained loyal to her
- So for the first half of his adult life, Thutmose III was little more than a puppet Pharaoh
- All the while, he deeply resented Hatshepsut's domination of his throne
- After Hatshepsut's death, Thutmose III goes on a vendetta to erase her memory
 - He had all official references to her removed from monuments and buildings, her face chiseled off wall art, etc.
 - And any of her allies in power were systematically eliminated
- Obviously, Moses was closely associated with Hatshepsut, so he was especially vulnerable
 - It was only a matter of time before Thutmose III acted against Moses, probably sooner than later
 - Realizing that he had nothing to hold him to Egyptian culture, Moses is stirred to reconnect to his Hebrew people and act upon his faith
- Moses' faith led him to choose God's people over Egypt, but it was the circumstances of Hatshepsut's death and Thutmose III's threats that prompted Moses' timing
 - Every walk of obedience involves both faith tugging on our heart and the Lord pushing us through circumstances
 - Moses must have given thought to his fellow Hebrews on numerous occasions in the past
 - He may have even witnessed similar moments of brutality
 - But on this day, Moses was stirred to take action in defense of Israel
 - Because God eliminated Moses' other options, he was able to see clearly that his future lay with Israel and his people
- After taking this step, a curious thing happens

[Ex. 2:13](#) He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?"

[Ex. 2:14](#) But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known."

[Ex. 2:15](#) When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

- Moses returns to the Hebrew encampment the next day
 - At this point he sees two Hebrew slaves fighting with one another
 - Moses steps in to stop the fight, asking one of them why they are fighting
 - The one responds, who made you our prince or judge?
 - Then he asks, are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?
 - Moses is stunned to hear this comment
 - These two Hebrews were not involved in the previous day's events
 - The only person who saw Moses kill the Egyptian was the Hebrew that Moses had saved
 - Yet the next day the news has spread so far and fast that these two Hebrew youths already know the story
 - This leads Moses to remark that surely the matter has become known
 - Moses realizes that Hebrews are spreading the story about the murder
 - And if the Hebrews are speaking this openly about it, then eventually the news will get back to the Pharaoh
 - And Thutmose III is looking for any reason to have Moses put to death
- Even more disturbing to Moses than their loose lips was the Hebrews' unwillingness to be ruled by him
 - The fighting youths ask Moses who appointed him as prince or judge over them

- Clearly, the Hebrews weren't interested in seeing Moses leading them
- And they even mocked him a little for his presumptuousness in assuming he could be their leader
- Was Moses actually seeking to lead the Hebrews when he killed the Egyptian?
 - Let's consider what Stephen tells us in Acts

[Acts 7:22](#) "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

[Acts 7:23](#) "But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.

[Acts 7:24](#) "And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.

[Acts 7:25](#) "And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

- Stephen recounts the history of Exodus 2
 - Moses was a man of power in words and deeds as he approached his fortieth birthday
 - And at that time in his life, it "entered his mind" to visit his brethren
 - While Stephen doesn't tell us why it entered his mind, we already learned why
 - It was God working through faith in Moses' heart and the circumstances of his adoptive mother's death to prompt this visit
 - Then Stephen relates the story of Moses killing the Egyptian taskmaster
 - Notice that Stephen gives the correct perspective on Moses' actions
 - Moses didn't murder the Egyptian; Moses came to aid of a fellow Hebrew
 - This is a type of justifiable homicide
- Then in v.25 we get to the most important part of Stephen's testimony

- Moses supposed that the Hebrew people would understand and recognize that Moses was acting this way because he was called to be their deliverer
 - Specifically, God had called Moses to this role, and Moses knew this even at this early time
 - So Moses takes this action expecting that the rest of God's plan will fall into place
 - The Hebrew people would embrace Moses and rally behind him
 - Then God would produce a miraculous escape for the nation led by Moses
 - But as Stephen says, the Hebrews didn't understand this about Moses
 - This explains why Moses returned the next day thinking he was the new Hebrew leader
 - When they mock him and reject him, he is surprised
 - And if the Hebrew people won't support him, Moses knows he has only one choice left
 - He will have to run away from Egypt and the Pharaoh
- Moses had the right idea, but the wrong timing
 - Moses was on the right track, but he didn't understand God's entire program
 - Specifically, he didn't realize that another 40 years needed to pass before it would be time to bring Israel out of Egypt
 - Understanding this history helps explain Moses' hesitation to take the reigns of authority when God finally appears and tells Moses it's time to return to Egypt
 - We'll study that moment in the coming weeks, but even now we can understand Moses' reluctance
 - He remembers that Israel didn't want to follow him the first time

- Moses probably dismissed the whole idea once he fled the land
- Remember this story the next time you feel discouraged in your own pursuit of ministry
 - God may have laid something on your heart, and you felt that burden and recognized the call
 - But so often, our timing is off
- And if we act too early, as we often will, and God doesn't bring us the results we expect because the timing isn't right, just remember that the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable
 - Sooner or later the timing will be right
 - And if we use our past disappointment as reason to say no when God gives the green light, then we will make the same mistake twice
 - We will have missed God's timing
- There is another picture of Christ in this part of Moses' story
 - Jesus lived a normal life until he reached his 30th year
 - Then he received a call from God to go out as leader of the Jewish nation
 - And like Moses, the Jews didn't recognize Jesus as their appointed leader
 - And so they rejected him, requiring that Jesus return for Israel in a future day
 - In the meantime, Israel is left in their bondage, bondage to sin
- In v.15, Moses makes his escape and finally stops traveling when he reaches Midian, stopping at a well
 - If you have studied Genesis with me, then you know anytime a traveler stops at a well, good things are about to happen
 - Sure enough...

[Ex. 2:16](#) Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

[Ex. 2:17](#) Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock.

[Ex. 2:18](#) When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?"

[Ex. 2:19](#) So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock."

[Ex. 2:20](#) He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat."

[Ex. 2:21](#) Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses.

[Ex. 2:22](#) Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

- Moses is in Midian, which is the land in the northwestern corner of Saudi Arabia, just south of Jordan
 - While there, he encounters seven daughters who came together to draw water for their father's flock
 - As the story goes, a band of hooligan shepherds ran the women off
 - But Moses decided to intervene coming to the aid of the women
 - The women ran to tell their father of the stranger's kindness
 - We know that Moses was not a Hamite, yet they call him an Egyptian
 - This means Moses was probably shaved like an Egyptian with the characteristic clothing and makeup of Egyptians
 - In their excitement, the women left Moses behind, so Dad tells them to find him and invite him to dinner
 - The father's name is Reuel
 - In the next chapter, he is called Jethro, which is his priestly title like Pharaoh (but his name is Reuel)
 - One thing leads to another, and Moses marries one of the daughters and they have a son, Gershom, which means driven out

- For the next forty years Moses will serve Jethro
 - Remember, Jethro is the priest of Midian
 - So his son-in-law (Moses) may have also been considered a priest
 - He was also a shepherd during this time
 - Though it may not be intended by scripture, there seems to be another picture of Christ in these details
 - After Jesus was resurrected, he left to go to the house of His Father
 - While there, he is serving as our High Priest
 - And He is the Shepherd of Gentile people
 - Again, this comparison may be a stretch, but it is interesting