

Old Testament Core Seminar



4

EXODUS 1-18

Introduction

Good morning. Today we finally leave Genesis (sort of), and move on to the next book, Exodus. I say “sort of” because the first 18 chapters of Exodus are in many ways a continuation of Genesis. Just look at **Exodus 1:1** and following. There you see another genealogy, keeping track of the descendants to whom the covenant promises are made. And look at **verse 7**. That language of being fruitful, and multiplying, and filling the land with exceeding numbers is plucked right out of the original creation story, the creation that now God is out to restore with His plan of redemption. And we will continue to see the struggle between the “seed of the serpent” and the “seed of the woman.”

Now, if you’re just joining us today, and all that sounds confusing, fear not. These first 18 chapters of Exodus still have a lot to teach that stands on its own, and you will still benefit from our study today.

[PRAY]

Context

Historically speaking, today we pick up our story about 300 years later from where we left off last week. At the end of Genesis we read of Joseph’s death, which we can date somewhere around 1800 BC. Exodus, then, begins with the birth of Moses which we can estimate to have occurred sometime before 1500 BC. However, the bulk of our story today will take place when Moses is 80 years old, so the events we’ll read about today occur somewhere in the mid 15th century BC (somewhere around 1445 BC or so).¹

But what is more important is where we are in redemptive-history. Again, “redemptive-history” is the historical record of God redeeming a people to Himself after they’ve fallen into sin. Well, as I mentioned, Exodus picks up the story after the death of Joseph. God has made a promise to Abraham that his descendants will comprise a great nation that will possess the land of Canaan, and will be a blessing to the rest of the world. This promise was passed along to his son Isaac, and then his son Jacob. But by the end of the book of Genesis we really don’t see too much fulfillment of these promises. They aren’t a great nation and they don’t possess any land – in fact at the end of Genesis they aren’t even in the land of promise, let alone possessing it. Instead they are living as foreigners in Egypt.

And that is where we pick up today – the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob living in Egypt. Yet there is more. I said that it’s been about 300 years since we last read of this family in Genesis. In those 300 years they have indeed multiplied greatly in number. Look at **Exodus 1:6-7**. [READ] They have also become enslaved in the land of Egypt. Look at **1:8-16**.

¹ These dates are rounded for simplicity’s sake, and based on 1 Kings 6:1 as a reference, knowing that the Temple construction began in 966 BC. The dates also assume that the 400 years mentioned in Genesis 15:13 began when Joseph was enslaved.

[READ] Doesn't sound good. What ever happened to God's promise to be their God and to bless them? What ever happened to a lot of God's promises we might ask. This oppression we are reading about here is another manifestation of the old Genesis 3:15 prophecy: the "seed of the serpent" is trying to snuff out the "seed of the woman." So what's going on? Will the Satan succeed in his deadly plans? Will the promises of God fall to the ground? Does God even remember His promises? What will become of the plan of redemption? This is the stage upon which the drama of Exodus will be played.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Theme

This is what we will see here in Exodus 1-18:

God is now spreading the knowledge of His name, fame, and glory out to the entire world as He continues His plan of re-creation by redeeming His people from cruel slavery by the power of His might, in order to bring them into a special relationship with Him, while foreshadowing the life and ministry of Christ.

So what we are going to see today is that God's powerful work of rescuing His people from this slavery was done *so that* God could glorify Himself in all the earth. This was all part of His continuing plan of redemption, as He brings His chosen people into fellowship with Himself, and serve as a foretaste of the greater end-of-time return to the original Edenic state of man and the universe – which will be accomplished through Christ.

[This outline does not need to be gone over. The class only needs to be told that it is printed in their handouts so that they could have a little guide for their own study.]

Outline w/ Pivotal Texts

- I. Exodus 1:1-6:13
The People of God are cruelly oppressed – section ends with God's promise to rescue (The "seed of serpent" persecutes the "seed of woman.")
- II. Exodus 6:14-12:39
The LORD publicly punishes the oppressor of His people – section ends with the Exodus (The "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent" do battle.)
- III. Exodus 12:40-18:27
God's people are now free to live in fellowship with Him – led to Mount Sinai (The "seed of the woman" has triumphed by God's grace.)

Theme texts

3:7-12

Let's begin our study of these things in chapter 3. Unfortunately, we won't have time to look at everything involved in the exodus. Let's just look at **three overarching themes** in the exodus that will most help us understand how it fits into the whole story of the Bible:

1. The exodus is a redemption, a deliverance, a salvation from the slavery to brutal, oppressive, severe captivity and oppression.
2. The LORD does this salvation alone from beginning to end, using a blood sacrifice at the crucial moment of salvation.
3. The LORD takes his newly redeemed people to a new land so that they can enjoy new life in relationship/fellowship with Him

Let's look at each of these in turn, and then we'll consider why they are important themes. Look at **Exodus 3:7**. [READ] Notice how the language is piled up to help us feel how severe this slaver is. The LORD has seen their "misery," heard their "crying," and is concerned about their "suffering" caused by their "slave drivers." In chapter 2, verse 24 there is language about their "groaning." And we already looked at chapter 1, verses 8 and following, where it says their slave masters "oppressed" them, and worked them "ruthlessly," making their lives "bitter." Then in chapter 5 we read that the oppression gets *worse!* So the first thing we are meant to see is that the exodus is the salvation of God's people *out of* something: out of tyrannical pitiless captivity.

Secondly, look at **Exodus 3:8**. [READ] Notice that the LORD is declaring Himself to be their savior. There is absolutely not even a hint that Israel, or even Moses, will be helping the LORD in any way. Moses will simply be the tool in the hand of the LORD.

Exodus 6:6 – "Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.'"

But it should also be pointed out that the final act of deliverance from Egypt is accomplished through a blood-sacrifice. Chapter 12 describes the Passover where the blood of a lamb was used to protect the people of God from the wrath of God. More on that later. It's enough for now to say that God is doing this redemption, using a blood-sacrifice as His final instrument.

And thirdly, look again at **verse 8**. They are rescued *out of* slavery with the intent of taking them *into* something else: into the land. As we mentioned last week, the land is meant to symbolize and prefigure the future re-creation of the entire universe so that mankind can again enjoy that unhindered fellowship with God that he had before he fell into sin. So the purpose of taking the people of Israel to the land is to give them a place that emphasizes their special relationship with God. It's even suggested here in Exodus 3. Look at verse 10. The LORD calls them "my people," and in verse 12 we are told that when they come out of Egypt they will worship God.

So we are focusing on three key aspects of the exodus. (1) God's people are redeemed out of oppression, (2) by God Almighty Himself through a blood-sacrifice, (3) to have fellowship with Him in the land which He is giving them. These three things will be major reoccurring themes in the rest of the Bible. If there is one theme that can rival Genesis 3:15 in how

pervasive it is **throughout the Scriptures**, it's the exodus event. In fact, it's more obvious that the exodus is paradigmatic for the rest of the Bible than even Genesis 3:15 is, because Genesis 3:15 lies underneath many texts (it is kind of looms behind the scenes), but the language of the exodus is explicit seemingly everywhere.

The **themes of the exodus** are everywhere in the rest of **Moses'** writing. They are called to love God with all their heart, and soul, and strength. They are told to carry out all kinds of animal sacrifices. They are told to obey God if they want to keep the land.

The themes of the exodus are everywhere in the **historical books**. After they take the land, the people of God are always fighting off oppressive invaders. Furthermore, every leader is compared to Moses – Israel's leader during the time of the Exodus.

The **Psalms** frequently speak of the exodus and make allusion to it more than we probably realize. (Psalm 130 is a great example.)

The **Prophetic** books describe the exile as a sort of reversal of the exodus as the people fall out of fellowship with God and loose the land, becoming aliens again in foreign lands where they are again mistreated. Then, praise the LORD, the *return* from exile is portrayed as a new and greater exodus, returning to the land by God's mighty right arm, to again have fellowship with Him.

Then, in the ministry of **Christ** we see the full expression of what the exodus was always meant to point forward to. In Luke 9:31 Jesus, literally, calls His death and resurrection an "exodus." And so we see that Christ's redemption of us was even greater than the redemption that Israel experienced. (1) They were rescued from the bondage of Pharaoh's slave drivers. We were rescued from the cruel grip of sin itself and it's tyrannical sway on our lives. (2) They were rescued through the blood of a lamb, and had to continue to make more and more sacrifices in the future. We were rescued by Christ, without any help from us, through His own blood which He poured out once and for all on the cross. And (3) they were brought into the land which only symbolized a greater reality in the future. We now enjoy that reality: fellowship with God through His Son, in the Spirit. Even though we are not in the New Heavens and the New Earth yet, we still know the love and fellowship with God in a very real way, and now we wait for the full realization of that fellowship when Christ returns.

See if you can hear those three motifs in Paul's description of Christ's earthly ministry:

Galatians 4:4-7 ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

It's all there: (1) rescue from slavery, (2) by Christ, (3) to make us sons of God.

Then, on top of those three themes, there are many other things from the exodus that reappear in Christ's ministry: the tabernacle, journeys to Egypt, going through waters, temptation in the wilderness, feeding the multitudes, calling His followers on the mountain, the transfiguration, and on the list could go. But we will get to all of that in due time.

In the New Testament letters the word "redemption" is a common word, and we are said to be waiting to enter our end-times land: the New Heavens and the New Earth. And the plagues in the book of Revelation mirror the plagues in Egypt here in Exodus.

So it's very important to understand the exodus, and what God is doing in it, if we are going to understand the rest of the Bible. The exodus is simply everywhere. We could just about turn to any page in the Bible and find some sort of allusion to the exodus. The IVP Dictionary of Biblical Theology says it like this:

There are over 120 explicit OT references to the Exodus in law, narrative, prophecy and psalm, and it is difficult to exaggerate its importance. Foundational to Israel's self-perception... it is recalled in liturgy, prayer, and sermon. As the preeminent saving event in their history, the Exodus profoundly shaped Israel's social structures, calendars, remembrance of the ancient past, and hopes of future restoration. Because of their conviction that Jesus fulfilled Israel's destiny, the NT authors couch their works in Exodus language, albeit on a cosmic scale and with reference to all peoples. (487)

Thus, we need to know the exodus well, and be able to spot the themes of the exodus in the rest of the Bible, if we are going to understand the rest of the Bible. And we should look for those themes in the rest of the Bible. When you study the Scriptures, don't read so quickly as to just pass over the exodus language that is there. Look for it, and think about why the author is using such language where he is.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

3:13-15

The next thing we need to look at is also right here in **chapter 3**. Look at **verses 13-14**. [READ] Moses is the man God has chosen through whom God will speak and rescue His people. But before God does this, He reveals to Moses what His name is. In calling Himself "**I AM WHO I AM**" God is describing Himself in many ways. And it's quite a gripping name for Him to give Himself: so short yet so profound. He is saying that He exists and that His existence is absolute; He did not derive His existence from anyone or anything else. He is self-existent, self-sufficient. He is eternal. He simply and absolutely *is*, and everything else is secondary to Him. He is the ground of all reality. Everything finds its reference point in Him. He determines all that is. He sustains all that is. He judges all that is. Everything else exists by His will, and for His glory. He is the "I AM." I am what? "I simply AM." And He defines Himself as a personal, relational God, calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²

You may have noticed that in the first three classes I've referred to God as "God." But then today I also started calling Him "the LORD." What does it mean when you read in your Bible "**the LORD?**" [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] This name "I AM" is where the Hebrew name "Yahweh" (or some even say "Jehovah") comes from. Well, it's a long story about how it came to be this way, but it's enough to say right now that what you read in your English Bibles as "the LORD" is actually the translation of "Yahweh," or "I AM." So I have begun to refer to God as "the LORD," and I'm going to often refer to Him as "Yahweh," because it is the name by which He has revealed Himself to Moses. He hadn't revealed Himself by name to anyone before. This is a new event in redemptive-history.

² And not only that, but Jesus sees here that the great "I AM" is a God who raises the dead, by calling Himself the God of these people who have long since died (Mark 12:26f).

Now, there is *a lot* more that could be said here about the divine name. Unfortunately time escapes us. For now though, it is *very* interesting to note that in John 8:24 and 8:58 (and a lot of other places in the gospels) **Jesus** calls himself “I AM.” What is Jesus saying about Himself when He does that? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] He’s calling Himself God! Jesus is God. Jesus is who we are reading about here in Exodus when we are reading about God performing great miracles to rescue His people.³

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

4:22

Let’s keep thinking about where Christ is in the exodus. Turn to **chapter 4**, and look at **verses 22-23**. [READ] What needs to be pointed out here is that Israel, the many many descendants of Abraham, is here called “**God’s son**,” God’s “firstborn son” in fact. What it meant that Israel is God’s “firstborn” is that Israel is in a very unique relationship with Yahweh, which no one else enjoys. Israel is special, first in God’s affections. They *are* God’s covenant people. And as God’s covenant people, they receive special blessing, but they also have a special mission: to display Yahweh’s glory to the rest of the nations and so make Him known throughout all generations.

Well, you don’t need to be an Old Testament expert to know that Israel was not too good at that task. They weren’t very good witnesses to the other nations. They often forgot Yahweh and went after other gods, false gods.

Even right here in the exodus story do we begin to see their failings. Briefly notice five quick things:

1. At the end of the Exodus event, the “son of God” miraculously passes through the waters of the Red Sea. That’s in chapter 14.
2. Then, in 16:2, we are told that they are in the wilderness and being tempted.
3. No sooner do they cross the Red Sea that they start complaining about not having food to eat. You can read about that in Exodus 16.
4. Then in Exodus 17 they don’t have water, and it says in verse 2 that they “test” the LORD in their quarreling.
5. Then in Exodus 32 (which we’ll think more about next week), while Moses was getting the very 10 commandments (the first of which was to have no other gods before Yahweh, and the second was not to make any idols), the people were down at the foot of the mountain worshipping an idol and calling it god!

So they (1) pass through the waters, (2) are tempted in the wilderness, (3) complain about the food, (4) “test” the LORD, and (5) worship other gods. This kind of behavior, we will see, is the typical experience of the “son of God” in the Old Testament.

But, (again, remember what **typology** is!) the Old Testament identification of Israel as “the son of God” was a foreshadowing of One who will be a greater manifestation of “the Son of God,” One who will succeed in all the areas that the nation of Israel failed. And who is that? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] Turn to Matthew chapter 3. Look at verse 16. Jesus passes through waters. And in verse 17 He is called “God’s beloved Son.” Immediately, in chapter 4, He goes into the wilderness to be tempted. The first temptation surrounds food (verses

³ For more on the divinity of Christ and the Trinity, people can be referred to the Systematic Theology courses.

3-4). The second temptation is to “test” God (verses 5-7), and the third temptation is to worship someone other than God (verses 8-10). Does any of that sound familiar? It’s the same experience that Israel had: through the waters, into the wilderness, tempted in these three specific ways. Only there is one difference. What’s the difference? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] Jesus succeeds where Israel failed. Interesting little fact: Jesus succeeds by quoting Scripture right out of Moses’ speech to Israel (in Deuteronomy) when he tells them what they should have done during those temptations.

So our application here would be to learn from the example of Jesus. [Enter here (1) knowing the Scriptures, (2) knowing the Scriptures *in context* as they are *meant* to be understood, and (3) how to apply the Scriptures in the right way at the right time.]

Matthew is telling this story of Jesus’ baptism and temptation in the wilderness to make one clear point: Jesus is the true embodiment and fulfillment of all Israel was supposed to be. He is the true Israel. He is the truly faithful “Son of God.” He is what the nation of Israel only dimly pointed forward to. He is the reality of what Israel was only the shadow.

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

5:2 et al.

The next thing we want to look at is *why* Yahweh is rescuing His people, and why He’s doing it with all the plagues that He reigns down upon the Egyptians, the nation oppressing His people. Why not just rescue them without all the drama? Turn to **chapter 5**. When Moses confronts the Pharaoh with Yahweh’s command to let His people go, look at how the Pharaoh responds. [READ VERSES 1-2] Now those are fighting words! You can mark **verse 2** as *the* question of the book. The rest of chapters 5 through 18 will be the powerful answer to that question: “**Who is Yahweh that I should obey Him?**” Yahweh will now go on a very convincing campaign to make Himself known, not only to Pharaoh, but also to all the Egyptians, the Israelites, and the entire world. The exodus will be Yahweh’s introduction of Himself onto the world’s stage. The exodus is the propagation of the name, fame, and global knowledge of God. Yahweh is taking His glory public.

To the nation of Israel He says this in **6:7**. [READ]

Of the Egyptians He says the same thing in **7:5**. [READ]

The intent of the first plague is this: **7:17**. [READ]

The second plague: **8:10**. [READ]

The protection of Israel from the plagues: **8:22**. [READ]

The reason He provides for His people in the desert: **16:12**. [READ]

To Pharaoh he says this in **9:14-16**. [READ] Did you hear the reference to the entire world? All this is happening in Egypt so that Yahweh’s reputation for being a powerful savior may spread and be proclaimed in all the earth. In fact, these plagues are meant to disgrace the Egyptian gods. Look at **12:12**. [READ] Their greatest god is actually the Pharaoh Himself, who is supposedly the incarnation of Ra. But look at **14:4**, [READ] and **14:17-18**. [READ] Yahweh will brook no rivals. There is no one like Him in all the earth, and everyone needs to know that.

And it seems that this campaign of public glory has worked. Look at **14:31**. [READ] Israel believes in Yahweh! And look at **18:11**. [READ] These are the words of a man named

Jethro, who wasn't even involved in the conflict, but living in another land at the time. Apparently word had spread to him. By the time the Israelites reach the promise land, the news of these events will have already reached the people there (Joshua 2:8-11)!

Yahweh is moving now from being a God who made some promises in the past, to being the God who cares for His people and fulfills those promises. And He wants all the world to hear about His powerful and glorious acts of redemption. We could expect that, couldn't we? After all, He created for His own glory. Thus, it is no surprise that His plan to redeem His people, and eventually the created order itself, will be for His glory.

Jonathan Edwards once said that "All that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works is included in that one phrase, the glory of God." He is creating, revealing Himself, redeeming His people, doing justice, etc. etc. for His own glory, that He may display His glory, that we may see His glory, that we may marvel at His glory, that we may enjoy His glory.

So, as with everything else we've seen so far through Genesis and Exodus, stay tuned to see this theme of God's self-glorification come up on the Old Testament (and New Testament) again and again.⁴

There is great application that we can draw from this. First, you were created to bring glory to God. And if you are trusting in Christ, remember that you were redeemed from the slavery to sin so that you might be a glorious display of who God is. Thus, we are (1) created, and (2) redeemed so that we might glorify the greatness of who God is. We are twice indebted to God's glory. How might your life be different if you thought of your life as more than just doing your job and taking care of your family? What if the dominating banner over your life was to give glory to God? How might your attitude towards other change? How might your relationships change? How might your money management change? How might your time management change? How might your career change?

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

11:1-12:32

Of course we don't have time to look at all the plagues. Let's just look at the last one. Turn to chapter 11. This is "**the Passover**." Again this is a major event in Israel's history. It was celebrated and commemorated every year at a feast called, lo and behold, "the Passover." It is the plague that actually broke Pharaoh to let the people go. God had promised that this last plague will be the worst of all. He warned the Pharaoh that every firstborn in Egypt would die in one night, even the Pharaoh's own son. Look at **11:4-6**. [READ] What is interesting about the Pharaoh's son is that he too is considered a god. Again, we see Yahweh executing judgment on all rivals to His divinity, His throne, and His glory. Pharaoh is de-masked as the imposter that he is when he cannot protect Egypt nor stop Yahweh from taking his son.

However, look at **verse 7**. [READ] No Israelite will die? Why not? Because they are God's covenant people. Now, there is something they have to do. They are to take a one-year-

⁴ Here are only *a few* examples of God working for the propagation of His own glory: Genesis 1:26-27; 11:1-4; Exodus 9:13-16; 14:4; 20:3-6; 32:9-13; Deuteronomy 9:1-3; 1 Samuel 12:19-22; 2 Samuel 7:23; Psalm 19:1-2; 23:3; 86:8-10; 106:6-8; Isaiah 43:6-7; 48:9-11; 49:3; Ezekiel 20:6-22; 36:22-23; Matthew 5:16; John 7:18; 17:1-8; Romans 3:21-28; 15:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Peter 4:11; Revelation 4:11; 19:6-7

old male lamb without blemish and spread its blood over and around the doors to their homes. Then they are to eat the lamb together with unleavened bread. Then, look at **12:11-13**. [READ] And the people of God did just that. At midnight that night they were safe as the Egyptians' firstborns all died. So the Egyptians finally drove them out, fearing any further plagues. But, as you probably know the story, Pharaoh became angry and pursued the Israelites with his terrible army, probably the most powerful army on the face of the earth at that time. The army had the Israelites pinned against the Red Sea, but Yahweh miraculously parted the waters so that His people could pass through in safety. Pharaoh's army on the other hand, drowned as the way made through the waters collapse upon them.

At any rate, what I wanted to point out was that a blood sacrifice, placed over and around the doors by faith, was the means by which God's wrath "passed over" (hence it is called "the Passover") His people. Of course we will see this idea of the shedding of blood as a means of **grace and mercy** again. We'll see it in the work of the Old Testament priests and all the sacrifices they are going to make. And we will finally, and ultimately, see it where? [WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO ANSWER] We will see it in the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to absorb the wrath of God on behalf of His people, and so shed His blood in the process. John the Baptist said of Jesus when he saw Him: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

[Enter here application in that the plagues of Egypt function just as the flood in Genesis 6-7, as a foretaste and foreshadowing of a worse judgment and destruction at the end of time...and the only way to escape that judgment and wrath is, again, through the blood sacrifice of a lamb, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ...hence, we all need to place all of our trust firmly and entirely in the death and resurrection of Christ...]

[TAKE QUESTIONS]

Conclusion

Well, as always *a lot* more could be said on that topic, but we need to conclude. What we've seen today is that Yahweh is fulfilling His covenant promises of old. He has not forgotten them. Rather, He has rescued His people from cruel captivity in dramatic fashion, dramatic fashion that highlights His power and glorifies Himself around the world. Now His people are on their way to the Promise Land, where they will be a special people to God, and a light to the nations. While they may not be the most faithful bunch, Yahweh will still be gracious and patient with them, since they are the "seed of the woman" who will birth the Savior, they are "the son of God" meant to foreshadow the true "Son of God," our Lord Jesus Christ.

[PRAY]