

GOD ALONE

Exodus 1:1-7 - Week #1

Call to Worship: Psalms 1 and 2

We serve a Holy God - God Alone! We need to be reminded of who our God is. HE IS GOD ALONE!

Introduction:

Exodus, is the 2nd book of the revealed Word of the Old Testament and the Pentateuch. It follows the book of Genesis.

Exodus is a book about a man, Moses. Moses, the author of Exodus, is a 'living presence' all over the book, but he is not the hero of the book. In fact, Moses is not heroic at all. Moses proves to be impulsive, hesitant and negligent. He is a 'mixed man' who fails to recognize his God given potential, and his own human limitations. We learn much from Moses, but this is not his book.

Exodus is also a book about a nation, the nation of Israel. It follows the movement of the descendants of Abraham, to their becoming Israel, the people of God. Israel, the nation, is the 'spine of the book', for the narrative follows Israel's trail, but Israel is not the leader, not the predominant mover in Exodus. Israel is only 'following'. We will learn much from Israel, but again, this is not Israel's book.

And in spite of Hollywood's depictions about the Exodus, and the famous dramatic presentations about Egypt's court and the wilderness, Exodus is not about such low levels as mankind or nations, at all, in the 'ultimate' sense. No. The book of Exodus is about 'the sovereign God of heaven and earth'. To miss this fact, is to miss the point of this book. Exodus is about 'GOD ALONE', how 'GOD ALONE' presides high above and vaulted over His creation, and how 'GOD ALONE' defines the terms of man's relationship with Him, how 'GOD ALONE' works through all people for His great glory and purpose, how 'GOD ALONE' holds sovereign power and authority, from the highest mountain peak to the most inner recess of the human soul. And Exodus demonstrates how Egypt, the greatest earthly empire of the time, and Pharaoh, the most powerful leader of the known world, were both humbled and brought to their knees under God's eternal power and authority, under 'GOD ALONE'. Man is laid bare for what he is, like a speck of dust, under the Holy God of the Exodus.

So why the study of Exodus, rather than some other book of Scripture, and why at this particular time? Jason introduces some of the 'themes' of the book to demonstrate the relevance and timeliness of the study

1. Exodus is a book of 'transition'.

Exodus marks the transition of God's people from 'bondage to redemption'. It marks the transition of God's people into 'relationship' with Himself. No longer are they a 'rag tag' of descendants, but have now become unified as a nation, a nation 'in relationship' with their Holy God. Exodus describes the nation's journey, though not all of it, (like movement from conception to birth). In Exodus 'the promise' (from Genesis) is fulfilled, redemption occurs, but by chapter 40 of the book, you are left with 'expectation'. More is to be said.

We too are people 'in transition'. We have been bought, washed, redeemed, set apart, and now are 'in transition', for we are not yet in glory, but are duly conformed to living godly lives, being sanctified to His will and

calling. And because we, as Christians, are also 'in transition' there are principles in the book of Exodus for us to learn. And as the 'corporate' body of Westmount, having five years of 'new season' now completed, this study is timely for Westmount, for it is time to 'take the next step' in the journey.

2. Exodus is a book about 'revelation'.

Exodus is a book where God makes Himself known. And yes, God was known to Noah, Abraham, and Joseph back in Genesis, but in Exodus God reveals Himself 'intimately' to His own chosen people. There is the famous aspect of this revealing, where God makes Himself known by coming down in the 'burning bush' on a mountain, and later in a 'tabernacle', but Exodus also unveils the God Almighty 'intimately' laying 'foundational revelation', concerning Himself to His people. We learn His name, His attributes, His Law, and His expectations for worship. And God also reveals Himself to Egypt, so that the nations would know who He is, (but this foreign revelation is less important).

And so, now, thousands of years later, we, as God's people, need this revelation, and we need it now. We stand between salvation and glorification, but somewhere along the way, through the years or the seasons, we have lost our 'revelation' of the Holy God, lost our view of the Holy God. We've forgotten who God is. But for the masses, this loss, this absence, is not a memory loss, is not a 'gradual' forget. No. It is years of 'neglect'. Within the church proper, there has been 'growing unbelief': many bored and restless with the Word, saying the Word is not enough, having low views of God, watering down the views of God, acting fidgety, and wrong attitudes have infiltrated the church. Where is the high view of God? We are harvesting the consequences of this low view of God, reaping the years of 'Buddy God', and being casual about God, assuming that God understands our 'pet sins', and the years of tolerating our disobedience. Is there any wonder we cannot trust such a God? We turn to this weak view of God, or that weak view of God, and then wonder, can we really trust You in these difficult times? But God is not an option.

God is GOD ALONE!

3. Exodus is a book of 'deliverance'.

Exodus is a book of sweeping 'narrative', an epic story, at the heart of which God 'delivers' His people, and 'delivers' His promise. An oppressed people, in bondage, are liberated, by God, by sea, yet this physical deliverance is not the only deliverance in the book. If this was the only deliverance, the story would end at chapter fifteen. So this is not 'the deliverance'. And we find this 'delivered people', this 'free/liberated' people grumbling, and dancing around, and erecting statues. These delivered people are in need of 'deliverance'. But the 'deliverance' needed is not from circumstances.

We too must take care not to be fooled. Over and over we seek that things around us should be better. If only I could be 'delivered' from this marriage, this family, this pandemic, this government, this debt, this illness, this trial, this job, then life would be better. But circumstances are like a 'mirage', illusive. What man needs is not deliverance from circumstances, from the things around us. No. Man needs 'deliverance' from what is inside of us and from what is killing us, SIN. Sin's death rate is 100%. We need 'deliverance' from this one thing that kills us all. This Exodus points us to 'deliverance'.

4. Exodus is a book about 'communion'.

By 'communion' the book of Exodus is not talking about the Roman Catholic sacrament. Redeem good words. 'Communion' refers to 'intimate relationship communion', specifically, 'relationship with their Holy God'. It is not referring to 'communion' with each other. No. It is referring to a relationship, ie, 'Communion' with the Holy God. So what then does this mean? Who defines the terms of this relationship with the Holy God? Is it to each their own? NO. Such would then require many 'personalized' books of Exodus, one for each and every one of us. So while we think we might like it to be on our terms, private copies of Exodus would not meet God's standard. Such would result in a 'Thomas Jefferson style Bible', cutting out this word and that word. This would prove to be 'lip service' Christianity, cheap and ineffective. Believing in Him, living a life for Him, is just the opposite. It is upside down from the world's viewpoint. It is costly, not cheap. It causes change. It is specific and distinct. Like it or not, God has defined the terms of the relationship. He has stated the boundaries. He has established the standard. It does not happen on your own wings, or feelings, and it does not follow the copy of your own personal script.

In Exodus, we see humanity's great problem on display. Sinners want a Saviour, but they don't want a LORD. God's given Laws arouse and result in 'protest'. Life is quiet at first, but then we find large areas that refuse to submit. Why is this, you ask? At heart, we are 'rebels' just like Israel was. That is why we study Exodus. That is why Exodus is important. And so we begin the study of Exodus.

Exodus 1:1-7

"Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household; Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them." (NASB)

Thus the book of Exodus opens, and provides the background/setting for the story. Joseph is already in Egypt (because, back in Genesis, his brothers had sold him to a trading band years before and he ended up in Egypt), and this is the list of the remaining brothers (all sons of Jacob) who also went to Egypt, taking their families with them. There were seventy persons in all.

I THE PRESERVATION OF GOD:

Some of the story has already been told, back in Genesis. We know, for example the story of Isaac, and the story of Jacob. Exodus is a 'continuation' of these stories. Exodus is part of a 'bigger story', and all the smaller stories are connected. When Exodus opens, its first verse naming off the sons of Jacob, (translated from the Hebrew reading 'And then these are the names...') this is clearly a 'continuation' of the story that has already started (in Genesis). The story, while divided into parts, is connected, and is meant to be read as one book.

Genesis, the place of the beginning. We will look at the story briefly, from the beginning. First, all was created. In chapter 12, Abram is called by God, and God's Covenant promise is made with Abram. He tells Abram, "And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 3b (NASB) The Covenant continues in chapter 13 where

God promises Abram, "for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered." Genesis 13:15-16 (NASB) In one sense Genesis provides a 'scaffolding' for the book of Exodus. The framework becomes even more specific in chapter 15. We read:

Genesis 15:13-16

"And 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. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete'." (NASB)

It is made clear, without doubt they will be in a land that is not theirs, they will be affected by slavery for 400 years, judgement will come upon their oppressor, the sinful state of the Amorites is not yet complete, and in the fourth generation the people shall return to their homeland. Prophecy and promise, detailed by the Sovereign God Himself. And so, 'expectation' continues through the descendants

The last half of the book of Genesis tells the story of how matters unfolded, leading up to this shift from Canaan to Egypt. Isaac has two sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob has twelve sons, his favourite being Joseph. Joseph is despised by his brothers, and the brothers plot against Joseph. They dump Joseph in a pit, but decide it is more profitable to sell him than to kill him. They sell him off to a band of traders for twenty shekels of silver. The traders take Joseph on to Egypt, and the brothers report Joseph as dead to their father. "Meanwhile, the Midianites (the traders) sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard." Genesis 37:36 (NASB) And Joseph rose in favour with his master.

Genesis 39:2-4

"And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house and all that he owned he put in his charge." (NASB)

Over time, Joseph interprets a series of dreams, including one for the Pharaoh. Pharaoh finds favour with Joseph, and raises him to a position second only to the Pharaoh himself (thus second seat in the world at that time).

Genesis 41:39-41

"So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.' And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See I have set you over all the land of Egypt'." (NASB)

And so Joseph ruled Egypt under Pharaoh, and Egypt prospered as Joseph had said would happen. But then the severe famine strikes the earth as was indicated in Pharaoh's earlier dreams.

Genesis: 41:28-30

"It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land." (NASB)

Genesis 41: 46-49

"Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt. And during the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt, and placed the food in the cities: he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure." (NASB)

Genesis 41:53-57

"When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do.' When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. And the people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth." (NASB)

Meanwhile, back in Joseph's homeland, the famine strikes them as well, and Jacob hears how there is food available in Egypt. He sends his sons, Joseph's brothers, to Egypt to procure this lifesaving food.

Genesis 42:1-5

"NOW Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, 'Why are staring at one another?' And he said, 'Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.' Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers; for he said, 'I am afraid that harm may befall him.' So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also." (NASB)

The brothers end up in Egypt, and come face to face with Joseph, and in time Joseph reveals himself to them. He does not seek revenge for their ill treatment of him. Instead he deals kindly with the brothers. And he sends for his father, Jacob.

Genesis 46:26-27

"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, 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." (NASB)

Genesis 47:28

"And Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous." (NASB)

Jacob lives in Egypt for seventeen years before he dies. He asks Joseph to bury him back in Canaan, which Joseph does. But now the brothers fear that Joseph will pay them grief for what they did to him years before.

Genesis 50:15

"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him.'" (NASB)

But Joseph seeks no revenge. Joseph recognizes what God has been doing. Joseph has looked above his circumstances, and kept his view of God high. Joseph realizes that his being sold into Egypt was part of God's plan for His people. Had circumstances not happened in the way they did, he and his family would have starved back in Canaan; this 'family of promise' would have died out. Instead, they are alive and well in Egypt, 'preserved' by the Sovereign God. So while the brothers, humbled, seek forgiveness, Joseph looks at the bigger picture, sees that he is where God has placed him, and reassures them that all is well.

Genesis 50:19-21

"But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones, So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.'" (NASB)

So Joseph remains in Egypt with his brothers through to the third generation, and as he approaches his death he reminds the family that God will surely continue to look out for them, and will ultimately bring them to the land which he promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are not to worry. Egypt is not their permanent homeland, and God will walk before them.

Genesis 50: 22-26

"Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. And Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Issac and to Jacob. Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying 'God will surely take care of you, and you

shall carry my bones up from here.' So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt." (NASB)

And so we have seen that God works through the evil choices of man, to further His decrees and purposes. God has 'preserved' seventy people, a remnant, chosen by Him to be His people; God's 'promised people', held fast, held in favour, and are 'recounted' as this book of Exodus opens.

Exodus 1:5

"And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt." (NASB)

Yet you may be left with questions. What of the promises? What of this seventy? Seventy is a countable number. But the promises referred to a nation, and land, and many descendants. And yet 'Genesis' has just come to the end. Therefore, Exodus is not a new story. Exodus is a continuation of the story. It is a continuation of this unfolding, this 'revelation' of God that began in Genesis. We see the continuity between the setting of the two books. Genesis ends in Egypt. Exodus begins in Egypt. And the characters are the same. We can immediately identify with the names, and the story situation.

The initial verses of Exodus introduce us to the backdrop of the situation from Genesis, providing us with the names of Jacob's sons who went to Egypt.

Exodus 1:2-4

"Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher." (NASB)

Interestingly, the names of the sons are grouped by their mothers. The sons of Leah, Jacob's first wife, are listed first, and then Rachel's son, Benjamin (Joseph already being in Egypt), and following the sons of the legitimate wives, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, the servants of the wives, are then listed. So Exodus begins with distinct precision and accuracy, matching with the details of the previous book, Genesis. So with the setting in place, the story moves on.

II THE PROMISE OF GOD:

The story, moving along from Genesis to Exodus, shows us a change in the status of these Hebrew people. They began in Egypt as seventy people, and they lived well over the years. 'Preserved' by God, they remain strong, they do not die out, and while the initial generation has lived out their lives and passed on, 'as a people' they have been 'fruitful' and strong and have multiplied, with ever more generations to follow. This 'growing people', no longer a mere seventy in number, were filling the land, so that the land was 'swarming' with them. We read:

Exodus 1:6-7

*" And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them."
(NASB)*

This was the covenant promise by the Holy God, that they would become 'many descendants'. It is He who is behind this. By natural circumstances, these people should not have been 'preserved' and strong, should not be there at all. But as Exodus opens, we are reminded of the promise of Sovereign God. God Alone is faithful to His Covenantal Promises, and therefore, GOD 'PRESERVED' HIS PEOPLE! He was working in the background, over those many years, working in His All-Sovereign, All-Powerful way to carry things through. NB: NOTHING, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, CAN SABOTAGE THE PLANS OF GOD! No scheme of man, or force of evil can sabotage His plan. God is all faithful, all powerful. God is unstoppable! He will deliver on His promises, and will deliver in the dealings with His people. He has worked through the famine. He has worked through the evil brothers. He has 'preserved' the people, and He has blessed them with fertility. He has been fulfilling His promise.

Exodus frequently points to 'someone else'; it 'shadows' others to come. This book is about 'GOD ALONE' , but does not, as a book, stand alone. No. It is connected to what comes before, and it also is connected to what comes after. And so, in this study of Exodus, we must look forward. We will learn about a wicked ruler in Exodus, for example, who declares that all male Hebrew babies are to be killed, yet one baby is saved. This shadows another baby saved from a ruler's death proclamation in Matthew 2. In Exodus we will meet a man who renounces the glory of the royal court by condescending to his people in the wilderness. This shadows 'The Son of Man' who lays aside His rights as God in the flesh, noted in Philippians 2, and Matthew 4. We learn of Moses in Exodus, a man of God with compassion for his people, yet he is but a shadow of the compassionate 'Son of God' in Matthew 9. In Exodus we see a native Israelite interceding for his people, but he is but a shadow of our Great High Priest, our mediator, The Lord Jesus, as described in Hebrews 7. In Exodus the Mosaic Law is given, but this is a shadow of what is to come, for Jesus is the fulfillment of The Law. He declares, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17 (NASB). In Exodus a Tabernacle is created among the people, but in Christ, we see God 'tabernacle' with His people. Hebrews 7,8,9. So yes, in Exodus we see 'GOD ALONE' but the book of Exodus does not stand alone. We, as New Testament Covenant saints can now see what the Old Testament saints could not. We can see that Christ, the Son of God, is who the book of Exodus points to, is the 'FULFILLMENT' that was waited for. Exodus points to the ONE spoken of in Psalm 2 ("Do homage to the Son ... How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" Psalm 2:12 (NASB) Through the Son of God we are no longer separated from God. GOD IS WITH US THROUGH CHRIST ALONE! We now have access to this God of the Exodus. We can now draw near to God. Let us do so as we study the book of Exodus. 'COME AND BEHOLD HIM!' Exodus points to our 'salvation'!

Thank you, LORD, for your 'revelation'. Thank you, LORD, for what we are to learn.

Benediction: I Timothy 1:17

*"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."
(NASB)*