

We begin a new study this morning, the Book of Exodus. I often struggle with the issue of what texts of Holy Scripture should we consider. The Bible is a vast book, unlike all others, with a universal message for all who would listen; it is the word of God. It is the only book composed through the unsullied composition of its ultimate author and reflects the character of its origin. It reveals infinite wisdom; it is beyond human grasp apart from the regenerating and illuminating work of the Spirit of God. When it comes to selecting a portion to study, the only avenue that seems wise is to seek somewhat of a balance between the revelation found in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Scriptures. The former is foundational to the unfolding of the latter; they are, “so to speak,” one seamless garment. The Bible tells us how God has sought to glorify Himself by gathering a people who recognize His worth establish based upon the promise to Abraham of a land (a dwelling in the presence of God), a provision (the seed, the Messiah), and a blessing (the gift of the life of God) [Gen 12, 15, 17, 22]]. I have chosen to concentrate on the Book of Exodus to explain a portion of God’s grand Christocentric, redemptive program for the ages.

Exodus:

The Redemption of God’s People,
a Covenant with God’s People,
the Renewal of the Covenant for God’s people,
and the Worship Center of God’s People.

I. Introduction to the Book

A. The Author of the Writing

Conservative scholarship affirms that Moses composed the book during the time the ancient people sojourned at Mount Sinai, following the departure from Egypt. The evidence is found within the sacred scripture.

1. Several times Moses is instructed to write what is the contents of the book (17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27, 28).
2. Other Old Testament books affirm Mosaic authorship of Exodus. David charged Solomon to God’s “laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses (I Kings 2:3).” Ezra read “the Book of the Law of Moses”

(Neh. 8:1). Also, the Pentateuch is called “The Book of Moses” (Neh. 13:1).

3. Jesus quoted from Exodus 20:12 and 21:7 with the words “Moses said” (Mark 7:10) and from Exodus 3:6 saying, “Have you not read in the Book of Moses” (Mark 12:26).

B. The Date of the Writing

Though it is a considerable matter of discussion, I think the traditional date of 1445/6 is preferable over of ca. 1290. The latter is based on the occurrence of the “Rameses” who reigned at the later date, a city supposedly named for him. However, the city may not have been named for a pharaoh but was a common name. The Hyksos worshipped the sun god Ra (Rameses means “begotten of Ra”).

It seems that the earlier date is more consistent with the witness of the Scriptures (more will be said of this as we get into the text). Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus (Ex.7:7); when he wrote Deuteronomy, he was 120 years old (Deut.34:7). Thus, the span of time between Exodus and Deuteronomy is forty years. I Kings 6:1 states that Solomon began construction of the temple in Jerusalem 480 years after the Exodus in the fourth year of his reign (966 BC). The Exodus occurred at the end of the reign of Thutmose III or at the inception of Amenhotep II (1445 BC), 430 years to the day Jacob joined Joseph with his family in Egypt (12:40), and Moses climbed Mount Pisgah about 1405 BC.

Judging only from the content of the books, Exodus and Leviticus were written at Sinai where Israel stayed for over a year (Num. 10:11); there the law was received and instructions on the building of the tabernacle were given (From Egypt to Mount Sinai was a two-month journey [Ex.19: 1]). It may have been that Numbers was written on the journey from Sinai to the plains of Moab and finished there. Deuteronomy was written on the Plains of Moab forty years after leaving Sinai (Deut. 1:1-3).

C. The Title of the Writing

The English title of the book is derived from the focus of its contents, the exodus from Egypt (the titles of biblical books are mostly frequently derived from a major theme, a major character, or the author [the Hebrew title is

derived normally from the initial line of the book which is “And the Names” reflective of the genealogical note that begins the book]).

D. The Contribution of the Writing

The relevance of the book is found in the shadowed nature of Old Testament truth. It was given for New Covenant believers’ instruction (I Cor. 10:11). The OT prefigures, shadows, foretells, anticipates the truth of the NT.

1. In Scripture, the Exodus is rehearsed as the supreme example of God’s grace. It is a picture of our redemption through blood covering out of “our” land of bondage (“death does not overtake those under the blood”). When Moses and Elijah spoke of Christ’s death in the Transfiguration (Luke 9:31), the word for death connects it to our book. In the final triumph of God in the judgments at the end of the age (Rev. 15:3), the angels sing Moses’ triumph song following the Exodus 15:1-21). Christ is the fulfillment of all the Passovers (I Cor. 5:7), the final deliverer.
2. The re-occurring theme in the book is God’s faithfulness during unbelief. The ancient people of God are a picture of the new people of God.
3. The sojourn from Egypt to the Jordan is a picture of the believer’s journey in progressive sanctification to heaven (pictured in the OT as the land promised to the patriarchs). The greatest enemy at that time was unbelief, as it is in ours.

II. The Context of the Writing

The storyline of Exodus commences in the Book of Genesis.

Jacob (2006-1876), 430 years before the Exodus, entered Egypt (Ex.12:40), We are told that the exodus happened exactly 430 years later, on the same day (12:41) after he entered Egypt (1889). He died 17 years later (1859).

Joseph (1915-1805)

Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt at the age of 17 and elevated second to pharaoh at 30 (1885). The famine the Joseph predicted began in 1878.

The family was united in Egypt in 1876. The famine ended in 1871. Joseph died in Egypt (1805).

The Hyksos invaded Egypt and ruled from 1720-1570.

The Egyptians regained power under the Thutmoses' (the last dying in 1445) and was succeeded by Amenhotep I (1546-26). "Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exod. 1:8), likely refers to one of the Thutmoses'.

The Exodus, 1445 BC

Parenthesis: Why did God sent Jacob's family to Egypt?

1. The lash of necessity, a severe famine, drove them providentially to a place prepared for them through Joseph. The lash of necessity will drive them out as well, slavery and the threat of annihilation.
2. The sojourn to Egypt and the Exodus was a fulfillment of a promise made to Abraham when God ratified the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15).
3. It was not only God's physical safety net to preserve the people of promise; it was to prevent their subduction to idolatry ("for the iniquity of the Amorite is not complete" [Gen. 15:16]). God was allowing the Canaanites to engross themselves all kinds of perversion so that the people could justly be their judgment and disposition from the land of promise. "...know for certain that your descendent will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years.... In the fourth generation (turning) they will return here" (Gen. 15:14-16).

III. The Outline of the Writing

Scholars divide the book into four parts, largely along geographical and theological lines.

The Redemption out of Egypt (1–18)

A. The struggles in Egypt (1–11)

B. The deliverance from Egypt (12–18)

The Covenant Stated and Ratified at Sinai (19–31)

A. The giving of the covenant (19–23)

B. The ratification of the covenant (24–31)

The Covenant Broken and Re-established at Sinai (32–40)

A. The breaking of the covenant (32–33)

B. The renewal of the covenant (34)

The Erection of the Tabernacle at Sinai (35–40)

IV. The Comment on the Writing

A. The Redemption of God's People, 1:1-18:27



1. The situation in Egypt, 1:1-22

The theme of the chapter is that of bondage demonstrating the increasing opposition to the fulfillment of the promises given to the patriarchs on the one hand and the workings of God to fulfill His promises by returning them willingly to the land. There is a progression in the chapter: vv. 1-7 announces the theme of prosperity; vv. 8-14 announces prosperity in the context of opposition; and vv. 15-21 explains the cause of the prosperity. Verse 22 reflects the culmination of pharaoh's opposition. The themes of divine prosperity and human opposition are intertwined throughout the chapter.

a. The background, vv. 1-7

The data in these initial verses are found in Gen. 35:22-26, 46:27, and 50:26. They link Exodus with the Genesis narrative. What will be detailed in Exodus is directly related to what has gone before in Genesis.

Two points are made: the sons of Jacob and their families came to Egypt and died there; four hundred years later they were threateningly numerous. The context is that of the growing power of pharaohs in Egypt and the expulsion of the Hyksos. The Egyptians under Thutmose I (Amosis or Ahmose), the founder of the Eighteenth

dynasty, removed the Hyksos, also a people of Semitic backgrounds, from the land and enslaved the Jews. The Thutmose's, their successor, Amenhotep I (1546-1526) was likely the pharaoh that "knew not Joseph."

The Hyksos emerged in Egypt in the 18th century BC and gradually assumed political and military control over the Delta of Lower Egypt (including the Land of Goshen) and some of central Egypt from 1720-1570 in the context of weak and divided Egyptian leadership. The Hyksos had technological and military advantage by introducing the chariot and firing from it with a stronger, and hence more powerful, composite bow.

It is interesting that in the first verse the two names of the father of the twelve tribes are stated, Israel and Jacob. The name "Israel" is connected to the covenantal promises given to Jacob upon his return to the land (Gen. 35:10).

- 1) All of Jacobs sons came to Egypt; a note of importance in validating the huge numbers that departed four hundred years later (Gen. 15:13), some two million.
- 2) The arrangement of sons is in the sequence of the Gen. 35:23-26 account (Leah's sons, Rachel's son (Joseph was already in Egypt), and the sons of the two concubines).
- 3) The number of males that accompanied Jacob was seventy (v. 5). However, Acts 7:14 list the number as seventy-five. The apparent discrepancy may be resolved by the phrase "all his kindred." The greater number likely includes his grandchildren (perhaps).

Since the original audience would have known that Joseph and the first generation had died, the notation must serve a rhetorical purpose. While death occurred, life multiplied. Despite death, the nation flourished.

It is interesting that the verbs in 1:7, indicating the growth of the people of God, connect with the historical promise of multiplication (Gen. 17:2-7, 48:4). Additionally, the notion that the "land (earth)

was filled with them” is a fulfillment of Gen. 1: 28, the creation-fall-recreation theme. God’s intention in creation is being fulfilled in Jacob’s family. Israel is God’s starting point in reversing the effects of the fall in creating a new creation, a new people with whom He would dwell. A theme through the Bible is that God is seeking to gather a new people and it emerges through difficulties and struggles.

b. The oppression, vv. 8-22

The method of handling the growing menace of the amazing increase of God’s people is forced labor (vv. 11-14) and ethnic cleansing, the destruction of males (vv. 15-22). Remember, the Egyptians recovered from a two-century domination of the invading Hyksos peoples. With the dynasty restored under Thutmose I, a large, alien mass of people in the land would have posed a threat. The Egyptians, “seed of the serpent,” sought to curtail the multiplication of God’s people, but their efforts failed in each instance. The Israelites were viewed as a foreign people without citizenship or rights. It was too late to impose immigration restrictions. The Egyptians opposed the growth of the people of God, sustaining the effects of the fall, yet God’s promise of filling the land prevails. The failed attempts to abort the promises of God finds a parallel in the actions of Herod the Great to destroy Jesus, the destruction of the infants of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16). Neither pharaoh nor Herod can successfully oppose God’s ultimate design to create a new people!

1) A new Egyptian dynasty, vv. 8-10

Times changed and favored status faded. Two hundred seventy-six years after Joseph’s death, an Egyptian king (Thutmose I came to the throne; he did not know Joseph’s contribution [Acts 7:18]) and feared his people. He instituted the first extermination program against the sons of Jacob in two phases: slave labor and ethnic cleansing. The motive was the political threat they posed to the nation. That an Egyptian ruler arose that did not know of the contribution of Joseph was because the Egyptian rule over the land was interrupted by the Hyksos invasion and conquest for over 150 years.

Conservative scholarship generally dates the death of Joseph at 1806 BC, prior to the invasion of the Hyksos that controlled parts of Egypt from 1720-1570. The Hyksos were a Semitic people and that makes sense of 1:10. The Jews had an ally that was hostile to the Egyptians. The Hyksos were driven from Egypt in 1570 with the emergence of a powerful new dynasty under Ahmose.

The opposition to God this time is not a “serpent (Gen.3)” or Cain (Gen.4), or the sons of men (Gen. 6); it was an Egyptian. The new king of Egypt sought to oppose God’s life-giving work with death-dealing efforts.

2) The slave labor camps, vv. 11-14

The reference to Rameses (v. 11), a city built by Jewish slave labor, is the basis for a late date of the exodus by some. Scholars assume that the referent is Rameses II (ca. 1303-1213 BC). This cannot be the pharaoh of the exodus because the text says that he had died before Moses emerged as the leader of his people. Another option may be that a later editor updated the name of the treasure city to reflect its name at his time. There is no substantive reason to doubt that the exodus occurred in 1445 BC.

The cities of Pithon and Raamses were mostly likely fortresses (“storehouses”) in which garrisons and weaponry were stored to protect the land from invasion from the west. This seems to fit the context of Egyptian fear of aggression as well as to deal with internal threat from within (the Israelites, vv. 7, 9-10).

The harsh treatment by the Egyptians was simply an attempt to deal with the possible political and economic threat from an alien people within the nation by removing their rights and reducing them to slavery. By depriving them of their standing in society, the Egyptians sought to limit the potential of the Jews to offer organized resistance. The goal was to crush the spirit of the Israelites reducing them to abject servility.

Forcing the Israelites to work in distant places meant that families would be separated, parental guidance less, and conception of children less frequent.

3) The ethnic cleansing, vv. 15-22

a) The initial program: The decree, vv. 15-16

If all the male children were murdered, the nation would perish in a generation, the assumption being that females would have no option but to marry Egyptians and raise their offspring as Egyptians. This would certainly eliminate a foreign threat from within!

b) The program's difficulty, vv. 17-21

It is likely that there were more than two midwives among the Israelites; these are singled out to represent the others or, perhaps, they were the leaders among them. Twice it is stated that these women "feared God." These ladies were also very cunning; they outwitted a king! They feared (stated twice in our passage) God more than a powerful monarch! That only two midwives are identified suggests that the prominence of these women; they deserved to be remembered so that others might follow their example.

It is interesting that the two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, are named when the far more politically powerful pharaoh is not. These are women of great faith, a model for the nation of fearlessness and courage. Pharaoh's initial plan was to deal with the crisis privately and internally.

c) The consequential blessing, vv. 20-21

d) The added program, v. 22

It is somewhat ironic that Pharaoh commanded Israelite males to be thrown into the water, but later his action led to his military being drowned in the sea!

The final verse in the section is a fitting climax. With the decree, the pharaoh makes his program of ethnic cleansing public; Hebrews were not only required to kill Hebrews, but Egyptian participation also made it a public genocide. This is the first recorded attempt in history to destroy God's people, a

shadowing of the Russian pogroms of the late nineteenth-century and Hitler's holocaust in the twentieth. There were at least two reasons for casting newborns into the Nile: the convenient manner of accomplishing the task (quick and silent with no clean up) and, since they viewed the Nile as a god, it was a way of shifting blame. The loss of life became the Nile's decision!

Applications:

1. Israel's abject condition in Egypt is a picture of the human condition. Harsh taskmasters are like the burden of sin in our lives; it complicates our lives cause pain and despair. Though children of God through the promise made to Abraham, we all have "Egypt's" that weigh and pull us down; sin is simply a hard taskmaster. Have you found that to be true? What are you doing about those sins in your life, that the writer of the Hebrews says, "so easily besets us (12:1)."
2. Fear often prompts harsh reactions. The Egyptians feared possible oppression by a foreign people, so they acted to minimize the threat by harsh words and burdensome duties. We often react to threat caused with harmful reactions. Have you experienced this? Have you reacted this way? What practical steps are you taking to deal with your fears that prompts you to inflict pain on others?
3. God in His great providence protects His people, often doing so through human agents, in what often are very sad circumstances. This is the first recorded holocaust in history to be inflicted upon a people, a form of ethnic cleansing by destroying a race through the killing the male population. However, God is more powerful in effecting His purposes than the mightiest of nations. While terribly sad, is there not a source of comfort in all this? Powerful people are limited, our God reigns! How does this insight comfort you in your times of pain and distress?
4. The fear of God is of greater value than the fear of people. We must not fear what man can do to us because God is more true, gracious, and loving than those who would endeavor to harm us. Our safety and security, though it may not appear so in the short-term experiences of life, is not in obeying those who would hurt us, but in the God of heaven who has willed to love us. Do you find yourself fearing people more than God? What does

our passage tell us about the wisdom in this? Do you need to talk to yourself about how you react to what others say and do?

5. God blesses obedience. This is perhaps the second greatest lesson in our passage (the first being that God is greater than mankind). Sometime obedience to God seems freighted with negative consequences, but I can assure you that it is not the case in the long run. These midwives obeyed God at great risk, but their obedience was greatly rewarded in the preservation of a nation from extinction. Do you weigh the human cost before you make the decision to obey God in your family, workplace, among friends? Is that the path to being a blessing to them or to honor God?
6. One of the questions that issues from the conduct of the Jewish midwives is that of the ground of civil disobedience; these ladies were blessed of God for their conduct. Only God could rightly demand obedience to all that He says because he never oversteps His bounds to demand the unwarranted and unholy. Earthly authority sources have limited power and their demand for obedience is only to the extent that it is ordained of God. The taking of innocent life, the destruction of a people, ethnic cleansing is not the right of government. Government is instituted to curb wickedness and preserve peace. When a government, or any other authority-source steps beyond its bounds, the right to passive disobedient is an option.
7. A day is composed of a period of light and a period of darkness though it makes for a single day. There is an important lesson here for all of us that can be seen in our passage. There was the “dark night” of oppression and destruction imposed by tyrants and yet simultaneously is the “bright sunshine” of God’s protection and of believers who were willing to act in obedience to Him. “After darkness comes light, after light comes darkness” is a truism. What are you doing to live in the light when your day may be dark? Do you live knowing that the darkness in our experiences is only for a short time and our day will end in the bright light of God’s eternal daylight? How does this help you cope with the dark times? Does this not teach us the importance of perspective?