

Preview of Exodus

The Book of Exodus is a vital link in the chain of Old Testament history. To read this book without an acquaintance with what precedes or with what follows would leave one lacking a sense of completeness. The first word, now, suggests a close connection with what precedes. The last words, throughout all their journeys, suggest that not all had been said and that more will follow.

As part of the larger body of truth, Exodus reveals another step of God in the movement of human history. It has been said regarding the Pentateuch: "In Genesis God selects a field in which to sow the seed of His Law; that field, of course, is the Israelite nation. In Exodus He purchases and secures the field. In Leviticus He brings forth His seed but finds the ground hard and thorny. In Numbers, for forty years, He is plowing, clearing, and preparing the field; and in Deuteronomy He is again sowing the seed and harrowing it in." Exodus is a continuation of the great movement that culminates in Christ.

Exodus is the story of Israel's emergence as a nation. God desired that this nation under His government should cause other nations to be attracted to Him. This nation was not founded in order that God might forget other nations, but that He might reach them.

The purpose of the book is further seen by the content, which consists of three basic movements. Chapters 1-5 describe Israel's bitter bondage. Chapters 6-18 give the account of their deliverance. Finally, chapters 19-40 tell the story of their organization as a nation.

Like Genesis, Exodus is valuable for its anticipation of higher truths. The slavery in Egypt is a type of slavery to sin. The plan of deliverance, involving sacrifices and separation from Egypt, typifies the Christian's deliverance from sin. Once outside Egypt, Israel's experiences—victory, protection, provision, guidance, order, testing, instruction, worship—typify Christian experience as well.

Throughout the book, God is persisting, governing, and guiding. But we see the failure of the people and their murmuring against God. In spite of the people's sin, Jehovah remained their all sufficient provider—bread and meat, bitter water made sweet, and victory over their enemies. In Exodus, we see that human progress is always the result of divine grace and divine patience.

Lesson 1 28th January, 2018

Israel's Bondage in Egypt

Lesson Scope: [Exodus 1 to 2:23-25](#)

References in brackets refer to Exodus 1 & 2 unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Jacob and his family moved into Egypt at the invitation of Joseph, during a time of famine. Pharaoh welcomed them and offered them Goshen, the best of the land (Genesis 47:4-6). He welcomed them because of Joseph's wise management of Egypt's resources during the years of plenty, which had made him a national hero and a savior during the years of famine.

To keep Israel from being assimilated into Egyptian culture, Joseph arranged for his family to live separately from the Egyptians (Genesis 46:31-34). Under God's blessing in many succeeding generations, Israel greatly multiplied. The new king of Egypt saw Israel as a threat and feared an uprising. To keep Israel under his control, he brought them into cruel bondage, serving in his building projects. This bondage caused Israel to cry out to God for help.

God's people face trials and suffering at the hands of those who oppose them. Men of faith call out to God for aid and patiently wait for His deliverance. The truths of this lesson grow out of the doctrine of separation. This began at Creation, when God separated light from darkness. God's people have always been separate from the ungodly society among which they live.

In discussing the conflict between God's people and the world, make some practical applications. Endeavor to draw from your experience some ways that we must be separate from the world today. Then show how these areas will bring conflict between God's people and the world. Be sure to include the positive thoughts of God hearing the cry of His people when in conflict. He will always supply their needs as they are faithful in maintaining this separation amid the resulting conflict.

Lesson Aim: To consider the conflict between God's people and the world.

Theme Verses: [Exodus 2:24-25](#). And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

Lesson Text

A New King

[Exodus 1:1](#) These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household:

[Exodus 1:5-10](#) All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. ⁶ Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷ But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. ⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.”

An Afflicted People

[Exodus 1:11-17](#) Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. ¹³ So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. ¹⁵ Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” ¹⁷ But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

[Exodus 1:20-22](#) So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people,

“Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

A Hearing God

Exodus 2:23-25 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

Questions for Study

A New King

1. List ways the "new king" of Egypt related to Israel differently from the Pharaoh who ruled Egypt when Jacob brought his family to Egypt.
2. What are some areas where we can expect that the world will not understand us?

An Afflicted People

3. How can God's people prosper in the midst of opposing forces?
4. What lessons can we learn from the God-fearing midwives?
5. How was Israel's bondage similar to spiritual bondage?
6. In what ways are we tested by civil authorities today?

A Hearing God

7. What does Israel's sighing and crying indicate?
8. How does God indicate that He hears when His people cry to Him?

Analyzing the Passage

At the time Jacob arrived in Egypt, his extended family numbered seventy souls (Genesis 46:26-27). At the opening of the Book of Exodus, the children of Israel had become a multitude of perhaps two million people (1:7; 12:37). The new king of Egypt feared that Israel was becoming numerically stronger than the Egyptians and that, in the event of war, the Israelites might join forces with the enemies of Egypt.

To combat this threat, Pharaoh forced the Israelites to labor under taskmasters, who were to afflict and weaken them. That tactic failed and actually produced the opposite effect (1:12). Pharaoh's second attempt, requiring the midwives to kill the baby boys, also failed because the midwives refused to carry out Pharaoh's commandment (1:17). In a

third attempt, Pharaoh ordered the people to cast all the Israelite boy babies into the river (1:22). This was apparently partially successful (Acts 7:19).

In these difficult circumstances, Israel sighed and cried to God (2:23). God heard and was ready to help them (2:24). The words had respect (2:25) come from the same Hebrew word translated knew (1:8). God understood their need and was moved to help them.

In 1:13-14 rigour literally means to "break apart." This shows the severity the taskmasters practiced upon the Israelites.

In 1:21 "he made them houses" could possibly apply to Israel as a whole, but more likely to the midwives. God knows those who honor Him.

Principles and Applications

A New King

1. God's faithful people flourish under His blessing (1: 7). God's blessings such as sunshine and rain come upon all men. But when God's blessings come upon the righteous, they become fruitful and increase beyond many others, especially in spiritual life. We should be quick to remind others that we do not have a monopoly on this prosperity, but that God is ready to abundantly bless all who will surrender their will to Him.

2. Civil rulers of the nations at times oppose God's people (1:8). Because of the enmity between God and Satan, we should not be surprised when rulers of this world bring opposition to those who are serving God. This may come in the form of civil laws that God's people cannot conscientiously obey.

3. Men of the world move to hinder God's work (1:9-11). Consistent living by God's people often reminds others of their spiritual need. This may result in efforts that will test the integrity of God's people. Verbal or even physical abuse may be leveled against the righteous. Even when God's people are not subjected to threats and physical persecution, they recognize that they do not belong to the kingdoms of this world.

In our day, freedom, material prosperity, and ease can lull us to sleep and make us feel at home in this world. The appeal of modern technology and communication can easily lead us where we never intended to go.

An Afflicted People

4. In spite of opposing forces, God's people can prosper (1:12). A vibrant, personal relationship with God will keep us faithful to truth. The contribution of the church to our spiritual lives is invaluable. God's grace is always abundant for His people. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

5. God's people can expect conflict with evil to intensify (1:13-14). We live in a day when society in general has lost much of its moorings because of rejection of God and His truth. Many have thrown moral values and guidelines to the wind. When evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse, the distance between the godly and ungodly must necessarily increase. May we continue to fortify ourselves with the whole armor of God, so we can withstand in the evil day in which we live (Ephesians 6:10-19).

6. The efforts of the devil eventually become openly malicious (1:15-22). Because of the basic difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, there must necessarily be conflict in relationships at times. Even though we are enjoined to pray for those in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, history abounds with accounts where those of God's people were actively or physically opposed. We should not consider that we will be an exception. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

7. Men who fear God obey Him, no matter the cost (1:17, 21). When the principles of Scripture are at stake, God's people dare never compromise with the forces of evil about them. "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

A Hearing God

8. Men who fear God cry out to Him for help in their suffering (2:23). The connection God's people have with Him comforts them in time of trial and test. As we daily maintain that close fellowship, we receive grace to help in time of need. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

9. God will ultimately vindicate His people who suffer at the hands of evil men (2:24-25). Sometimes God's people suffer unjustly at the hands of ungodly men. But even in such cases, God delivers His people from the ungodly either in life or in death. As we are faithful to Him, we can rest in His providence and care.

Important Teachings

1. God's faithful people flourish under His blessing (1:7).
2. Civil rulers of the nations at times oppose God's people (1:8).
3. Men of the world move to hinder God's work (1:9-11).
4. In spite of opposing forces, God's people can prosper (1:12).
5. God's people can expect conflict with evil to intensify (1:13-14).
6. The efforts of the devil eventually become malicious (1:15-22).
7. Men who fear God obey Him, no matter the cost (1:17, 21).
8. Men who fear God cry out to Him for help in their suffering (2:23).
9. God will ultimately vindicate His people who suffer at the hands of evil men (2:24-25).

Answers to Questions

1. List ways the "new king" of Egypt related to Israel differently from the Pharaoh who ruled Egypt when Jacob brought his family to Egypt. The "new king" did not know Joseph and did not experience how Joseph had saved Egypt from disaster. He did not understand how Israel had prospered so greatly under God's blessing. He therefore viewed Israel as any other nation and became suspicious of their potential as a threat to Egypt's security. He took measures to keep Israel in Egypt to serve his personal interests of keeping Egypt a great nation.
2. What are some areas where we can expect that the world will not understand us? We can expect that the world will not understand that God's people can live a simple life and be satisfied. To those of the world, the ultimate goal in life is to please the flesh. To the Christian, true fulfillment in life comes by submitting to the Lord and living for the good of others. Also, we can expect that the worldly-minded person cannot understand a life of self-denial and a life of faith. Because the worldly-minded person does not live by faith, he wants to get all the pleasure he can now. The Christian, as Moses, has "respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26).
3. How can God's people prosper in the midst of opposing forces? As God's people live by faith, they claim God's promises in His Word to keep them regardless of the forces of evil arrayed against them. By faith we understand that God will always and ultimately be victorious, even though Satan and his forces at times appear to have the upper hand. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

4. What lessons can we learn from the God-fearing midwives?

We learn that when principles of right and wrong are at stake, we must always obey God, regardless what the consequences may be. We also learn that personal faithfulness to God is a blessing to the people of God (1:20).

5. How was Israel's bondage similar to spiritual bondage? Israel's bondage in Egypt was bitter to the point that they cried to God for deliverance. The bondage to sin is such that it prepares one for God's deliverance, just as Israel was finally ready to leave Egypt.

6. In what ways are we tested by civil authorities today?

Today Scriptural standards of morality are becoming increasingly unpopular. Will we pass the test of keeping our preaching and our literature soundly Scriptural, even when others look upon us as old-fashioned and official rulings and positions condone what the Scriptures condemn? We have been tested by mandatory health insurance. We are thankful for the exemption which has been granted, but what would our position have been if we had not been granted exemptions? Our schools could receive government subsidies if we would accept them.

7. What does Israel's sighing and crying indicate?

Their sighing indicates the wearing effect the Egyptian bondage was having upon them. Finally, the bondage of sin will wear a person down both physically and spiritually. Only God can bring release from the bondage. Israel's crying indicates they had come to the end of their own efforts for deliverance and were now coming to the One who alone could deliver them.

8. How does God indicate that He hears when His people cry to Him?

The promises of His Word give comfort to those who call upon Him. He gives spiritual rest to the laboring when they call. He continually makes a way for His people.

Summarizing the Lesson

God's people live in the world among those who do not love and follow God. There will always be a degree of conflict between them. As the world becomes worse and worse, we can expect that conflict to increase. May we keep our trust in the God of heaven who sees and understands this conflict. He is always faithful in delivering His people.

Research Guide

1. Study some pertinent Scriptures on the doctrine of separation: e.g., Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; James 4:4; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 2:15-17.
2. Study Daniel 6 for an example of one who was ready to face conflict with the world and who had a strong trust and confidence in God to deliver him in this conflict.