

SESSION #6

EXODUS

Leo Tolstoy provides a good introduction to the next book, the Book of Exodus:

“Adam himself lies now scattered on the whole surface of the earth. Formerly concentrated in one place, he has fallen; having been broken to pieces, as it were, he has filled the universe with his debris. However, God’s mercy has gathered together from everywhere his fragments and by fusing them in the fire of his charity, has reconstituted their broken unity.”

That is a wonderful statement for entering into the book of Exodus but it’s also a wonderful summary of the whole story of the Bible. The fall of man which we saw in previous sessions sets the stage for all the rest that happens. And as we move from Genesis into Exodus we have to recognize that Adam’s fall has indeed set the scene for us.

Genesis showed us something of the divine **purpose** of God as God not only in the first 11 chapters showed something of the four great events of the creation, the fall of man, the flood and the Babel crisis, but then focussed on four great characters of the Old Testament: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

And God’s purpose as we saw in the Book of Genesis was not only to create the universe that we know around us but to call out of humanity a group of people beginning with Abraham who would be His own people, a showcase kind of people to display what God is really like. That was His purpose.

With God’s purpose in mind and something of that background from the Book of Genesis then we move into the book of Exodus where we see God’s divine **performance** exhibited. How is God now going to work with the people he has chosen and how is He going to move them beyond where they are at the moment?

You’ll notice as we go through the OT that the names of the books usually have a good deal to do with their content. Exodus means what?

“Exit” is from the very same root word that gives us *exodus*. The people make an exit in this book and that’s really the main focus of the story of Exodus: they exit out of Egypt.

The theme, then, for the book of Exodus has to do with redemption; from groan to glory, as one of the commentators puts it. The people of Israel are groaning in slavery at the beginning of the book. And God is going to work with them in order to move them from groan to glory. From the groan of their slavery to the glory of being released from slavery into liberty by God’s great power.

STRUCTURE

The book of Exodus has two main sections to it: 18 chapters which describe the **deliverance** of the people of God out of Egypt, out of slavery.

And then 22 chapters dealing with the aspect of **worship**.

The “deliverance” section focuses on the power of God in action in order to deliver the people out of slavery. The focus is also on “life” – the life of the people and the story of redemption.

Then the bigger section on worship is split into two sections, one on Law and one on the Tabernacle. Or “Law: reconstruction” and “Love: reconciliation.”

| EXODUS | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Redemption – from “Groan to Glory” | | |
| DELIVERANCE | WORSHIP | |
| Chapters 1 – 18 | Chapters 19 – 40 | |
| <i>Narrative</i> | <i>Legislative</i> | |
| In Egypt (1–12) To Sinai (12–18) | LAW | TABERNACLE |
| Power of God | Holiness of God | Wisdom of God |
| Brought out to <i>liberty</i> | Brought under new <i>government</i> | Brought into new <i>fellowship</i> |
| Life: Redemption | Law: Reconstruction | Love: Reconciliation |

1. Deliverance

Let's then take a look at the beginning of the story, the deliverance. The background for the deliverance is that about 300 years have passed since the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus.

And during that 300 years the people of Israel have multiplied in Egypt but they have increasingly come into slavery as the Egyptians have put them into bondage. And so as we open the book of Exodus the Israelites are suffering greatly in conditions of awful slavery, crying out to God in the midst of their suffering and pain.

And God hears their cry and God raises up a deliverer for the people of Israel in the person of Moses.

It's very interesting that when you look at the last main character in the book of Genesis, and now the main character in Exodus – Joseph versus Moses – we see something of how God's methods work and the variety in His methods.

Joseph, as you'll remember, was raised in the Palestinian wilderness for ministry in the palace. Whereas Moses is the exact opposite: he was raised in a palace but for ministry in the wilderness. God's methods fit the situation and fit the personalities involved. He isn't constrained to any one methodology as He works with people and He can even use exact opposite methods with different people. Don't expect that God will automatically use the same method with you in moving you along in your Christian experience and your journey as He does someone else, because you are unique and God will use some different method or strategy with you than He will with someone else.

Well of course the story of Exodus comes to a crunch fairly early in the book as Moses, God's man, confronts Pharaoh the king of Egypt. And the first direct challenge to Jehovah God's authority in the OT is seen in the early chapters of the book of Exodus.

Chapter 5:2, Pharaoh says, "*Who is the LORD (Yahweh) that I should obey Him and let Israel go. I do not know the LORD. I will not let Israel go.*" That's the first direct

challenge to Yahweh's authority issued by Pharaoh. As a result of that kind of challenge in the face of the living God, what happens throughout the next few chapters in the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh is that God will prove who He is. Chapter 7:17, this is what the Lord says, "By this you will know – what? – you will know that I am the LORD." Pharaoh's complaint was, "*Who is Yahweh? I don't know Him. I'm not going to pay any attention to Him. I'm not going to obey Him? Who is He?*" And God responds: "*Ah, you don't know me, eh? By this you will know who I am.*" By this... by this... by this... over and over again.

So the first question arising in this book is "Who is Yahweh?" And God will answer this question in very dramatic, demonstrative terms.

But the second question is somewhat related: "*Who is Moses?*" Who is this man that God has raised up as the leader of the slave nation of Israel to bring them out of bondage? And the character and the leadership of Moses come increasingly into focus as the story progresses.

The real issue in the confrontation between these two men is not a confrontation at the human level. This is a confrontation at the spiritual level – the power of Jehovah versus the false gods of Egypt. That is what is in view.

And God, as you remember, brings plague after plague after plague upon Pharaoh in order to show that Jehovah God is the living God, and to show how absolutely helpless the gods of Egypt really are.

Numbers 33:4 tells us that the plagues were specifically directed against the gods of Egypt. Here's a few of them:

- Nilus, the sacred god of the river Nile. God challenges the authority of Nilus by turning all the water into blood.
- The Egyptians worshiped the goddess of reproduction often seen in the form of a frog. God said, "*You like frogs? You want to worship frogs? I'll give you some frogs.*" And the whole land is filled with frogs.

- They worshiped the god of the atmosphere and God showed His power in that arena by bringing a devastating hailstorm on the land.

- They of course worshipped Ra, the sun god. And God showed His immense power over Ra by turning off the sun and plunging Egypt into a horrible, tangible darkness.

- They worshipped the god of life but it wasn't Yahweh. And Yahweh showed that He alone is the living God, the One who has the power the life and death by bringing death throughout all the land of Egypt in the death of the firstborn son of every single family.

So God shows who He really is in the confrontation. You remember that at the end of this confrontation it comes to its climax in the 10th plague, the killing of the firstborn sons of Egypt as the angel of death goes through the land.

And in order to protect God's people, God asks each family of Israel to kill a spotless lamb and to sprinkle that blood over the doorway of their home. And again we see God's battle emblem rising to the forefront: *"a lamb as it had been slain."* That's the emblem under which God always brings victory. And here a dead lamb will pay the ultimate price with its life for the life of the firstborn son in the family of every Israelite family.

And when the angel of death went through the land and came to the homes of the Israelites, and saw the blood sprinkled over the doorway, what did he do? The Bible tells us the angel of death "passed over". So that event became known in Israel's history as the Passover. And that whole experience of the Passover was commemorated after that right up to our present day. One Hebrew scholar suggests that this Hebrew word "passed over" has very interesting connotations. It isn't just that the angel saw the blood and then sort of moved over that home.

The Hebrew has a more specific picture here: that he "danced over". When the angel of death came to the house of an Israelite, he danced over that home with joy. Why? Because the price had already been paid, there was no need to bring death into that particular home. No wonder he danced over with joy! The blood on the doorposts enabled those families to go free; the son didn't die in that house. His life was substituted by the lamb and thereafter the firstborn son of every family was always dedicated to the Lord in the history of Israel.

Of course, the Passover experience is fulfilled in the NT by the great Lamb, the Lamb of God, who brings all of the meaning of Passover to its ultimate fulfillment indeed. He paid the ultimate price, not just for one family but all the families of humanity so that you and I do not need to pay the price of death for our sins. He has already paid that price for us. And when God sees the blood over us, He can do what? He can dance over us with joy.

And so as result of that momentous night in the land of Egypt, the people of Israel packed up quickly and the Egyptians literally forced them out of the land. And God brings them out now to liberty by His own mighty power. A power seen very vividly at the parting of the Red Sea, so that the people of Israel could cross over that barrier on dry ground.

Then the Egyptian army trying to chase after them got into the middle of the Red Sea and the waters came down upon them and drowned them all. This was literally a watershed event for Israel. They never, ever, forgot it. They come back to this event time and time again in their history. It was a defining moment for them.

But as you look at the map of this part of the world, to the left you'll see the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived in Egypt. Where they were destined to go is the land of Canaan, basically northeast (our map is rotated a bit to the right which makes it look like straight east). Now if you just look at the map it would be natural to assume that the easiest, best and quickest way would be to go along the edge of the Mediterranean from point A to point B.

Why does God take them all the way down to Mount Sinai at the bottom of the map? Why not just take them straight across to the Promised Land. There are two very important reasons why He doesn't take them via the short way.

Number one: God has an appointment with them. Over and over Moses had told Pharaoh, *"Let my people go so that we may worship God."* That was the reason, the rationale. And God had an appointment with them at Sinai; they would meet with Him there.

The second reason God didn't take them by the most direct way was because as Exodus 13:17 says, they would encounter giants that they were not yet ready to face.

The shortest route is not always the best route because it can bypass some of the most blessed lessons in life. Beware of spiritual shortcuts. Trying to get a shortcut in our spiritual lives, not willing to pay the price, to pay the dues, that may be required to have a deep consistent spiritual walk with God. We would like to have just some kind of an experience like waking up in the morning and saying, "God, zap me!" And kaboom! And that's it. One shortcut and I'm a super spiritual Christian. It doesn't work that way.

God will often take us the long way around, through what seems to be a wilderness, in order to meet with us in a very particular way, and perhaps to avoid for us some dangers that we don't even realize are there.

In our next session we'll examine the giving of the Law and begin to look at the wonderful Tabernacle.