



**Exodus**  
Part 1, 2023

## **HOLY GOD, BELOVED PEOPLE**

The Book of Exodus tells an amazing story and a wonderful book to be studying. It's a story of God and a new nation, the people of Israel. At the beginning of the book they are being mistreated and oppressed as slaves, but by the end of the book have been rescued, redeemed, and have the Holy God of the Universe living among them. The story of these slaves being set free has shaped our world in hugely significant ways, making it one of the most influential books of all time. Many of our society's ideas about freedom and living according to moral rules and laws stem from the story we're going to begin to study over the coming weeks.

As we begin in Exodus, we are returning to the story that we made our way through in Genesis in 2021 and 2022. Genesis taught us a lot about our world and about God our creator. Its big message was one of hope: Though our sinfulness means this world is broken and full of pain and toil, God has a plan to do something about it. He's going to take the chaos and out of that chaos bring life. We've already seen that he's going to bring this about through this new people, known as Israel, the descendants of Abraham. Through Abraham, God promised that Israel would grow, that they would have their own land and that they would both be blessed and be a blessing to the whole world. As we enter Exodus, the first of these promises is being fulfilled before our eyes as Israel's population grows, but the other two promises seem a long way away.

In Exodus we're going to watch God's promises continue to unfold. But even more than giving his promises to his people; God is going to give himself to this people. He's not only going to save them and bring them into their new land, but he's going to go with them. He's going to live among them and take them to be his treasured possession, because not only is he faithful towards his people, he loves his people. And that is staggering.

This year we take the story as far as Exodus 15, journeying with God's people as far as the other side of the sea after God has brought them out of Egypt. Next year we will carry it forward to Mount Sinai and into the wilderness. The studies below match the sermon series passages and will work well either before or after the preaching of that section. They are intended to be used as a supplement to the COMA questions provided. This helps groups to grow in confidence to engage with the Bible in a simple and accessible way, while still providing specific questions that highlight particular aspects of the passage.

# COMA questions for Old Testament narrative

## Context

- What has happened so far in the narrative? Have there been any major events, characters or themes?
  
- What has happened just prior to the section you are reading?

## Observation

- What do you learn about the main characters in this section? How does the author describe them? How do they describe themselves?
  
- Is time or place significant in the events that happen in the passage?
  
- Is there a conflict or high point in the passage?
  
- Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story?
  
- What surprises are there?

## Meaning

- Are there any 'editorial' comments from the author about the events in the narrative? How do these comments illuminate what is happening?
- Does someone in the narrative learn something or grow in some way? How? What does this person learn?
- How does the passage point forward to what God is going to do in the future? Does it prophesy or anticipate Jesus Christ in some way?
- How could you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

## Application

- How does this passage challenge your understanding about who God is and what he is like?
- Is there some attitude or behaviour you need to change?

## **STUDY 1: FEAR AND FREEDOM**

**Passage:** Exodus 1

**Big point:** Fear the Holy God, who has the power to save. True freedom comes from living for him.

**Introduction:** Exodus begins with Israel in the land of Egypt. As God promised would happen, Abraham's descendants are growing in number, but that's about where the good news for God's people ends. They're not being treated well by the Egyptians and as the chapter goes on things only get worse. What's going on? And what's God doing here? How can this people find freedom? Begin your reading in Genesis 50:22 to see the connections between where Genesis ends and Exodus begins.

### **Questions:**

1. What indications does Exodus 1 give of God's promises to Abraham being fulfilled? Why is this not leading to blessing for Israel?
2. Notice how little God is mentioned in this chapter. It's all in reference to the midwives and their fear of God. What does fear of God look like for us? How does fear of God bring a sort of freedom for the midwives? Can fearing God bring a sort of freedom for us?
3. Who is Pharaoh afraid of in this chapter? Would you say Pharaoh is *free*? Could we make the mistake of living like Pharaoh today? What might that look like?

## **STUDY 2: LOOKING FOR RESCUE**

**Passage:** Exodus 2

**Big point:** Moses doesn't have the power to rescue his people in his own strength, and we don't have the power to bring about salvation either. We need to look to the Holy God.

**Introduction:** We have seen the plight of the Hebrew people. Enslaved, oppressed, and now even their babies are being thrown into the Nile. It's an awful situation. But in amongst this destruction, chapter 2 gives us a story of hope. A baby is saved and grows up to be in a position of power. Yet Moses' attempt at helping his people doesn't go anywhere good. He ends up Exodus-ing the country himself, and the people end up no better off. Not yet, at least.

### **Questions:**

1. Note that in the first part of the chapter, the Hebrew word used for the basket that Moses is saved in is "ark". What images is this story, therefore, trying to conjure up for us? Could Moses be something like Noah, and what significance would that have?
2. Looking at verses 11-14, what does Moses think of his people, the Hebrews? Why does his attempt to help them go so wrong? What do you think the story is trying to tell us about Moses as the one to look to for rescue for God's people?
3. Moses ends up back in the East, near the land promised to Abraham. He's had his own mini-Exodus, and looks pretty happy here, so what's lacking?
4. Where should we look for salvation? And who should we look to? What would it look like day-to-day if we're trusting in human leadership, or our own strength, instead of looking to God and the salvation he brings?

## **STUDY 3: HOLY GOD, BURNING BUSH**

**Passage:** Exodus 3

**Big Point:** The unchanging, powerful and Holy God, cares about his people.

**Introduction:** After two chapters where God has been largely absent, which seems to be a deliberate choice of the narrator, in chapter 3 God finally shows up with a display of amazing power. This is the turning point of the book of Exodus. Not because God's changed his mind, but because the unchanging, Holy God is ready to act in power for his beloved people.

### **Questions:**

1. In chapter 1 we talked about fear of God. What in today's story indicates that the Holy God is to be feared?
2. What qualities of God are displayed in this chapter? How might that move us towards worship?
3. How does God feel about his people? Why then has he waited so long to rescue his people from Egypt? What does this teach us about when and why God may or may not choose to act when we're experiencing suffering?

## **STUDY 4: THE ONE GOD SENDS**

**Passage:** Exodus 4

**Big Point:** The Holy God used Moses and can and will use us too.

**Introduction:** So far Exodus has painted an incredible picture of the Holy God who is ready to redeem his beloved people and bring them to true freedom in worship of him. Although Moses has no chance of rescuing Israel under his own strength (see study 2), God is still going to use him mightily. But Moses is very hesitant. Chapter 4 begins with Moses questioning God and struggling to work out if this rescue mission is really going to work. Through chapters 3 and 4, Moses has five objections as to why God should think about using someone else (see 3:11 and 3:13 for his first two objections). But God knows what he's doing. He can use Moses, and he can use you and I too.

### **Questions:**

1. See if you can list all five objections that Moses has as to why God shouldn't send him back to Egypt. What do you think of the objections? Is Moses a big whinger or do you think this is fair enough?
2. As readers of this story, what gives us confidence that Moses is going to be successful in this mission? How do we see this success beginning at the end of the chapter?
3. Moses was asked to speak for God. How have Christians been asked to do something similar? Do you feel reluctant like Moses? Do you share any of his reasons for being reluctant? What gives you confidence from this passage that you could speak up for Jesus?



## **STUDY 5: IS ANYONE LISTENING?**

**Passage:** Exodus 5:1-6:12

**Big Point:** Learning to listen to the Holy God even when things are getting harder, not easier.

**Introduction:** This is the first encounter Moses has with Pharaoh and the first of many times that we will read the phrase "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says..." There are three main character groups in this section: Pharaoh and his slave drivers, Moses and Aaron, and the Israelites. The story is told in such a way that we learn a lot by observing how these characters listen (or fail to listen!) to God.

### **Questions:**

1. Who is looking powerful and who is looking weak at this point in the story?
2. There is a lot of blaming going on in 5:20-23, but in 6:1-8 we see God taking responsibility. What is the impact of this on us as the reader? What impact should it have had on Moses and the Israelites?
3. How can we know, despite appearances to the contrary, that the Holy God really does have the best interests of his Beloved People in mind?

## **STUDY 6: THE HOLY GOD KNOWS THE HUMAN HEART**

**Passage:** Exodus 6:10-7:13

**Big Point:** God is using pretty ordinary men for an extraordinary mission. It's not them, but the word of God that holds the power.

**Intro:** We might not find a genealogy all that engaging. But so far in the story Moses has been fairly unimpressive and unsuccessful. It's probably worth checking his credentials, right? Either side of the genealogy we have the account of God's commissioning of Moses and his complaint that he speaks with faltering lips, which introduces the need for Aaron's help. So this isn't just about Moses' credentials, but Aaron's also and the important role his descendants will play as priests. It's also helpful to note that we are introduced to Korah, who will become a significant figure later in Exodus when he leads a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Korah is a cousin, with similar family credentials for leadership. Noting all of this, Moses' main question for God is simple: "why would Pharaoh listen to me?" The answer that God gives Moses should both surprise and encourage us.

### **Questions:**

1. Consider what we learn about Moses as God's agent of rescue in this passage. How does Moses describe himself? How does the genealogy describe him? How does God describe him? What does Pharaoh make of him? What do we learn about God from all of this?
2. We're about to get into the action of the lopsided battle of God vs Pharaoh. How does 6:10-7:13 prepare us for what lies ahead?
3. While it is tempting to read ourselves into the story as Moses, it's probably better to identify more with the Israelites off to the side of the action. Instead, in what ways do we see Jesus pre-figured in Moses?

## STUDY 7: GOD'S WARNING

**Passage:** Exodus 7:14-10:29

**Big Point:** The God of the Bible is the one true God – ruler over all creation and every human authority.

**Intro:** The plagues are a lot more than just fun stories for Sunday school. The account of the plagues is both carefully structured and full of significant details. Whilst we might groan at the suggestion of using a table to sum up such a wonderful Bible passage, it's really worthwhile to help us notice a lot of relevant information that we might otherwise overlook.

Complete the following table as you read through the passage:

Plague	Prior meeting and its location	Pharaoh's magicians	Pharaoh's heart	Israel spared
Nile				
Frogs				
Gnats				
Flies				
Livestock				
Boils				
Hail				
Locusts				
Darkness				

### Questions:

1. What stands out to you about the order and structure of the plagues?
2. What connections can you see between the interaction of Pharaoh and God here and the interaction of humanity and God in Romans 1:18-32?
3. What do we learn about:
  - God and his great power?
  - God and sinful hearts?
  - God and his beloved people?

## **STUDY 8: GOD'S RESCUE**

**Passage:** Exodus 11:1-13:16

**Big Point:** God's rescue involved protecting his people from a judgment they deserved as much as the Egyptians.

**Intro:** We have come to the 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague and from the outset God makes it known that things will be different. Whilst it makes for a lot of reading, the significance of this event is demonstrated by the amount of repetition: the event foretold, instructions for the event, instructions for the commemoration, the event takes place, further commemoration of the event. To underline the significance of this event for God's people, note that in 12:2 God resets their whole calendar with it. So, it is vital that we don't underestimate how climactic this is! Perhaps the most important aspect to note in all of this is also one that is easy to overlook. At the heart of the event and its commemorative festival was this great truth: were it not for the provision of the lamb, the Israelites would have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians.

### **Questions:**

1. What impact does it have to read of the commemoration of the event *before* the event has even taken place? What does God state is the purpose of the various commemorations?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the redemptive event celebrated by Christians and that celebrated by Jews at Passover?
3. Suppose a non-Christian friend says to you "The whole idea that Jesus had to die on the cross seems so terribly blood-thirsty and violent that I don't want to have anything to do with it." How do the events of Exodus 11:1-13:16 help us understand the cross?

## **STUDY 9: THE WAY OUT**

**Passage:** Exodus 13:17-14:31

**Big Point:** God makes a way for his people to be with him in freedom.

**Intro:** Throughout the rest of the Bible the events of the Exodus are viewed as a pattern for the way God saves. He is faithful to his promises and powerful to bring them to pass. God's salvation of his people incorporates the defeat of his enemies. His salvation is dependent on God alone, given as a gift to those he chooses. Through his saving work, God makes himself known, which is to his great glory. There is a danger in reading the Exodus story as a promise of physical salvation whenever we are caught between our version of Pharaoh on one side and the sea on the other. Rather, we need to see the bigger picture that God is showing us.

### **Questions:**

1. Pharaoh has let the people go, but his change of mind in 14:5 reflects how little he has learned through the plagues. Looking at 13:17 to 14:14, how do we see the wisdom and faithfulness of God contrasted with the foolishness of Pharaoh and the faithlessness of Israel?
2. In many parts of the Bible the sea is used figuratively as an image of death and chaos. In what ways is it literally a place of death and chaos in this story? Therefore, what symbolism has God built into this whole rescue plan? How does it point forward to the rescue that Jesus brings us?
3. Compare the response of the Israelites in 14:11-12 with 14:31. What do we learn about human nature from this? How might we avoid making the same mistakes?

## **STUDY 10: CELEBRATION (AND COMPLAINT)**

**Passage:** Exodus 15:1-27

**Big Point:** God's rescue is worth celebrating – and remembering!

**Intro:** The song of Moses in Exodus 15 is one of the great celebration anthems of the Bible, and a great example of why we sing in church today – to celebrate and remember God and his salvation. It is a powerful mix of looking back in wonder at what God has done and looking forward with confidence in what he will do. It celebrates God as both awesome in power and holiness, while also tender in love and kindness. It is rich in content and feeling. And yet, only a few verses later we see a very different set of emotions! The contrast is sobering.

### **Questions:**

1. What emotions are described or represented in this song?
2. What is God called? How is he described? What is his relationship to his people?
3. Break the song up into sections according to the subject matter. What progression do you see through the song? What does this reveal about God's intentions for his people?
4. What is the impact of such a sudden change of tone in 15:22-27? What does it reveal about the Israelites and how does this serve as a warning to us?

