

May 6th

THE BIRTH OF ANTISEMITISM

“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. 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.” Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. 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.”

EXODUS 1:8-12

Iran. Iraq. Palestine. Israel. With these nations comes the reality of tension and war. Most of the conflict has been caused by fighting for a narrow piece of land that measures 25 miles in length and seven miles in width. What piece of property are we talking about? You guessed it...the Gaza Strip. But here we find in the first chapter of Exodus that the prejudice and racism against ethnic Jews doesn't begin when these countries were formed. Instead, God shows us the first hatred of Israelites in Exodus 1. What does God show us here?

Our antagonist for over half of the book of Exodus is introduced here in Exodus 1. His name is Pharaoh. Moses describes for us the timing of Exodus 1 in Exodus 1:8: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.” An accurate timeline is difficult to nail down for this time of the book of Exodus. Do you wonder why we don't have an accurate historical date for this book? Hmm...why would a mighty nation of Egypt include in their historical records being defeated by a bunch of Hebrew slaves? It's an embarrassing defeat, especially when you think about who the king of Egypt was. Pharaoh was seen as an earthly representation of the sun god Ra. There's much to be discussed with Pharaoh, but this is where we begin. This is the birth of antisemitism.

Why does Pharaoh respond this way to the Hebrews? God tells us in Exodus 1 that he is intimidated by the size of the Hebrew people. He claims that they are “too many and too mighty for us.” In addition, Pharaoh is concerned that they will join Egypt's enemies and escape from the land. Frankly, the Hebrew people are too valuable to Egypt. Where would their workforce come from if the Hebrews left? Slavery of an entire people group begins here. Slavery that includes harsh treatment of the Hebrews. Pharaoh's fear of losing a workforce drives him to the act of genocide. First, he orders Hebrew midwives to kill the male babies that are born. When the midwife tactic doesn't work, he orders all of the Egyptians to throw the male babies into the Nile River to drown. Hmm...this sounds very similar to another future leader that wants to protect his kingdom in Jerusalem. Anyone ever heard of Herod the Great?

Men, what does God teach us here? We will see Pharaoh often in this Biblical book. But what does God show us here in the first chapter? Remember, this event in Exodus 1 has already been predicted. God already has put into place this king of Egypt, just like He placed Joseph as a savior to Jacob's family. Men, God cannot be stopped. C.S. Lewis described our view of history as being “chronological snobbery.” When we look at our time, we can be tempted to claim it's never been this bad before. Men, after Genesis 3 the earth and all humanity have been cursed. The truth of the Bible tells us that people have always fought against God's people. But the truth also shows that God cannot be stopped. He always accomplishes what He sets out to do. Satan is on a collision course with death and failure. And this is the God that you serve! Don't give up. Your God fights for you. When the present looks the darkest, God brings His biggest hope. And His biggest hope is Jesus who rescues us from our sin! What an amazing God we serve!

Spend some time praising God that He cannot be stopped. Spend a few minutes asking God to continue to protect His people, both Gentiles and Jews.

For Further Reading: Genesis 15:1-21

