

The Deliverer Delivered
Exodus 1:22–2:10
October 12, 2025

Though this study in Exodus hasn't been all that long, we've already mentioned Stephen's speech in Acts 7 a couple times. And for good reason. It's one of the most extensive summaries of the Old Testament in the New. Why is *that* important? Well, it's not a stretch to say that his speech tells us *how* the earliest Christians put their Bible together.¹ How did *they*—many of whom had been taught by Jesus Himself—understand the Old Testament and how it unfolds?

If you haven't read Acts 7 recently, let me encourage you to do so. You'll see that in that speech, Stephen talks *at length* about Moses. In just a few verses he sketches out something of a bio, unfolding the life of Moses in three movements—each one separated by 40 years.²

But Stephen starts where Exodus starts, with a birth narrative. So, before we look at our text, we might consider how he—and the early church—thought about Exodus 2. Hear Acts 7:17: **But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. It was at this time that Moses was born.**

That's how the New Testament introduces our text. At *that* time, Moses was born. At what time? Verse 22 of Exodus 1: **Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive."** So, at what time was Moses born? At a time of terror, when every Israelite parent woke up to their nightmare.

1. A Son Born Under an Edict of Death (1:22-2:2)

I say "son" intentionally. In verse 22, it's not just "boy" or "girl," it's "son" or "daughter." Why is that important? Because throughout this narrative, boys and girls are spoken of *in relationship to* a mother and father. And that's on purpose. It helps us to see the magnitude of the horror. Last week, at length, Chris detailed the death culture that marked the Egyptian world, the world in which God's people lived. So, what occurs in Exodus 2 comes "at this time" when things seemingly could not have been worse.

So, with that cultural moment in mind, we can read verse 1: **Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.** At this point, we're *not* told this man and this woman's name. We find them out later. The sister mentioned in a moment is also unnamed. In fact, the *only* name we find in this narrative is the name of the baby in verse 10.

This is on purpose. Certain details are held back in order to emphasize other things. In *this* case, the emphasis is *not* on the husband and wife's name, but on their *line*. They're *both* from the house of Levi. It's possible that hints at things to come, but it certainly makes clear right off the bat that both parents are Hebrews.³

¹ Chris Bruno, *Biblical Theology According to the Apostles*, 55.

² You might *not* have considered this, but the vast majority of our time in *this* book will be with 80-year-old Moses. But that's not *all* of Moses's story. Next week we'll be in Midian with 40-year-old Moses. But *only* for one week. Exodus knows how to fast-forward.

³ Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, AOTC, 61. Verse 10 will end with a name. Our passage begins with a name, the name *Levi*.

A man from *that* house married a daughter of it. And then, keeping in mind Pharaoh's edict, we read verse 2: **The woman conceived . . .** We might pause there, after those three words. If they're human, what have mom and dad *obsessed* over for nine months? The edict? Yes. But maybe *more* specifically, the *gender* of the baby that's in her womb. Verse 2 tells us what they found out on the birthday: **The woman conceived and bore a son.** Again, it's not *just* "boy," but "son."

And when he was born, she looked at him with a mother's eyes. Verse 2 goes on: **and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.** Like this baby's creator, she saw that he was good.⁴ A culture that murders babies is an affront to the God of creation. Because concerning His image bearers, He says, over and over and over again, "good." This mother agreed with His assessment. Of course she did. So, what did she do? Verse 2 continues: **she hid him for three months.**

Maybe you've noticed. But it's worth pointing out that in Exodus 1 and 2 the women are putting on a clinic. We've already noted the character of the midwives. Today we'll note Moses's mother, his sister, and Pharaoh's daughter. The Pharaoh had chosen to preserve the lives of women in this narrative. And those faithful women ended up being his downfall.⁵

And according to Hebrews 11, Moses's mother hides their son not *merely* because she's his mom, but because of their faith. In Hebrews 11:23, that author writes, **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.**

Would there have been consequences if Moses's parents had been caught, if baby Moses had cried out when the "Gestapo" were nearby? Absolutely. Yet his parents did not fear. By faith they hid Moses for three months. In one sense, Moses's *parents* stood up to Pharaoh. They did what was right, regardless of the consequences. 80 years later, Moses would emulate his mom and dad.

But not yet. They hid him for three months. But maybe *after* those three months, like many newborns, Moses wasn't sleeping quite as much, and wasn't quite as quiet.⁶ That's what verse 3 implies: **But when she could hide him no longer.**

So, consider 9 months of pregnancy followed by 3 months of hiding, every moment living by faith under an edict of death. This isn't a year you'd wish on anyone, especially not a mother.

And maybe Exodus 2 reminds you of Matthew 2, where an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and says, **Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him** (Mt. 2:13).

Moses is born under an edict of death.

He's not the last. Note, secondly,

2. Delivered from Death by His Parents (2:3-9)

Verse 3 goes on: **But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch.**

As mentioned, the older the baby became, the harder it was to hide him. And yet this mother isn't deterred. People can disagree on this, but I think there's significance in the word we translate "wicker basket," because the *only* other place where we find this word is in the flood story. And *there* we translate this same word, "ark."⁷

⁴ The echo of the creation account is unmistakable, according to Jeffery Leonard, *The Preacher's Hebrew Companion to Exodus 1:1–15:21*, 64; see also Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New*, 77.

⁵ Alec Motyer, *Exodus*, BST, 19.

⁶ Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, 88.

⁷ Stuart, 88.

I think there's significance in that. Why? Well, both from a human *and* a divine perspective, the *same* author wrote Genesis and Exodus.⁸ But it's not only the word that leads me to thinking there's a connection, nor is it merely the fact that both books were written by the same author, it's also where this "basket" goes. After this mother gets this floating object and covers it with tar and pitch, verse 3 continues: **Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.**

She puts her son into *water*, into the river that last week's text pictured as waters of death.⁹ It's the same author, using the same word he used to describe an ark, about something someone gets in so that they might survive waters that no one else survives.

We've noted multiple times how the narrative of Exodus *depends* upon a prior knowledge of Genesis, but along the way we should *also* note how the second book of the Bible develops ideas and themes introduced in the first book of the Bible.

Ark or not, preservation is certainly the intent of the mother. Some would say **among the reeds** would've been the best place to hide something outdoors. Maybe the outdoor noise would overshadow the baby's cries. Or maybe the river's steady noise—like a 21st-century sound machine—quieted those cries from time to time. Regardless, the mother is continuing to live by faith. She's *not* putting him there for the reason Pharaoh decreed.

This son is in a basket of preservation among the reeds. And joining the mother's aim to preserve his life is the baby's sister. Verse 4 describes her role: **His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.** This isn't "Oh goodness, I wonder what might occur with my brother in the Nile." No, she's out there so she might keep a careful eye on him.¹⁰ She too has learned a thing or two from mom and dad.

And as she's watching, the scene changes dramatically. Verse 5 begins: **The daughter of Pharaoh.** Of course, you know what's going to happen in this story. But it *might* be helpful to imagine how someone reading this for the *first* time would read it. For over a year, all this father and mother and sister from the line of Levi have done is try and keep their son's existence far *away* from the awareness and ire of the serpentine figure called Pharaoh.

And yet, as their son is in the basket among the reeds, and as his sister stands at a distance to keep an eye out, in what seemingly *had* to be a terrifying moment—their nightmare unfolding right in front of her eyes—verse 5: **the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her.**

The daughter of the man who'd commanded every son be thrown into the Nile is holding a basket with a son in it. Again, if we read this with fresh eyes, we do *not* assume *anything* positive ahead.

Verse 6 continues: **When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold.** One commentator said that the word "behold" directs the readers to see through the eyes of Pharaoh's daughter.¹¹ We've *already* seen through the eyes of the sister as Pharaoh's daughter approaches the Nile. *Now* we see through *her* eyes as she opens it. Again, verse 6: **When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him.**

Don't miss how unexpected this would've been. The Egyptians were supposed to *bate* these babies. *All* the Egyptians. And presumably this hatred was a value Pharaoh's own daughter would've been expected to uphold ruthlessly. She'd come from a cruel, bloodthirsty, and heartless royal

⁸ Leonard calls it another echo of the Genesis story, 64.

⁹ Morales, 79.

¹⁰ Stuart, 90.

¹¹ Morales, 79.

family.¹² So, at this point, Moses's sister probably assumes her baby brother has met his end. And yet, Pharaoh's daughter opens the basket, sees him crying, and here's the twist: **she had pity on him.**

And she felt that pity *even though* she knew the baby's line. Verse 6 goes on, detailing what she immediately said, **"This is one of the Hebrews' children."**

We still don't know the sister's name, the sister that was watching to see what would happen to the baby among the reeds. But we do quickly find out that she's—for lack of a better term—savvy. Verse 7: **Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter.**

Now, I don't know what cinematic or cartoonish portrayals are influencing the way we understand Exodus 2, but Exodus does *not* imply that the baby went miles and miles down the Nile, nor that the sister was *ever* that far away from her baby brother. Instead, it seems that almost as soon as Pharaoh's daughter opens the basket the sister is right beside her.

Verse 7: **Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?"** I don't know if the sister thought through this ahead of time. Clearly Pharaoh's daughter wasn't planning on all this happening that day. Regardless, in the *moment*, the baby's sister has a plan—a genius one. For the Hebrew child just discovered, a child with certain needs, she'll be glad to provide a Hebrew mother to meet those needs. And, of course, the baby's sister has one in mind.

Then, in what some call the turning point of the story, verse 8 tells us what happens next: **Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother.** Verse 9 continues: **Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages."** The baby was to be nursed "for her," that is, *for* Pharaoh's daughter. That means, from this moment, the baby was hers. And with *that*, the baby's protection was assured.¹³ And yet, at the same time—for the time being—the woman from the line of Levi would receive her son back, safely. In fact, she would be *paid* to take care of her own child!

Verse 9 ends: **So the woman took the child and nursed him.** I love how Alec Motyer pictures the days to come, imagining the mother carrying the baby out and about and being met with, "That's a lovely little girl you have there" (because, of course, sons would not be out in public view), and being able to reply, "Oh no, this is my son." "Well then, hadn't you better keep him hidden?" would have been the obvious response. "Certainly not!" she could say with confidence. He's the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. They can't touch him."¹⁴

A son was born under an edict of death. And he was delivered.

3. So That He Might Grow Up to Deliver (v. 10)

See if verse 10 sounds like something you've heard before: **The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses.**

So, after the baby's mother took him away and nursed him, **the child grew.**¹⁵ But eventually, the mother brought the baby to Pharaoh's daughter. Previewing what's to come for all of God's people, he was no longer a slave. Brought to Pharaoh's daughter, **he became her son.**

So, as we consider this baby's birth, and his growing up, we might ask, "What other person could lay claim to both an Israelite heritage *and* an early life spent in Pharaoh's household?"¹⁶

¹² Motyer, 20.

¹³ Stuart, 92.

¹⁴ Motyer, 20.

¹⁵ That made me think of Luke 2.

¹⁶ Leonard, 65.

Wherever you look in this birth narrative, the hand of God is at work. Of course, it had to be nearly impossible to see *as* this or that was happening, as the basket was prepared, as the son was placed in it, as Pharaoh's daughter approached. And yet after it happens, it's clear: His purposes—wise and good—are unfolding. He's present. He preserves.

Brought to Pharaoh's daughter, and being adopted as her son, **she named him Moses**. In our day, often, a name is picked out prior to a birth. But that's not necessarily the case in the Ancient Near East. A name was often selected *later* and suggested by some sort of circumstance experienced at the time of birth.¹⁷ Verse 10 ends, **And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."**¹⁸

Children, that's foreshadowing. She draws him out of the water, among the reeds. And she names him something that forecasts or previews what he would one day do himself.¹⁹ Speaking of, do you know what they called the Red Sea back in those days? The sea of reeds.²⁰ This baby is drawn out. And one day he *will* draw out. On this day he's delivered, so that one day he might deliver.

Conclusion

We began with Stephen in Acts 7. And we'll end there, because it shows us how the early church put their Bible together. How did those taught by Jesus Himself interpret Moses?

As we study this book, we'll note that there are *quite* a few things Stephen *could've* said about the book of Exodus. But as we read Stephen's speech, we note that the early church didn't just recount the events of Moses's life, they interpreted them. They arrived at conclusions concerning who he was, and *why* he was sent. We might say, in light of today's text, *why* Moses was born, and *why* he was delivered.

Stephen says that Moses *knew* early on that God was granting His people deliverance **through him** (7:25). Stephen says, quite clearly, that **God sent him to be both a ruler and a deliverer** (7:35). He would be, and was, the one that **led them out** (7:36).

But most important for our consideration today, in Stephen's speech he makes sure to remind us that, after he'd delivered them, Moses said *this* to the sons of Israel, **God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren** (7:37). Out of *all* the quotes Stephen could've lifted from Moses, he picks *this* one. And it shows us what the early church believed. That is, the life of Moses intends to point us to One who'd come later. To One also born under an edict of death, to One delivered from it, so that He might deliver others.

And she called *His* name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

¹⁷ Stuart, 93.

¹⁸ The name Moses sounds quite a bit like a Hebrew word *moshe*, the active participle of the word *masab*, meaning, "draw out." See Morales, 80 and Leonard, 65.

¹⁹ Leonard, 65; Morales, 80.

²⁰ Morales, 80; Leonard, 48.