

**Text:** *Exodus 1–15*

Last week...

- We began our journey through the entire Bible together.
  - i. The goal of this journey:
    - to get a big picture of the whole Bible
    - to see how each book fits into this one story that God has written
- **GENESIS:** If you missed last week, here's what we saw. GEN. was written to show us...
  - i. **GOD is sovereign** over the universe that He created, and all that He does is **good**. The most amazing thing that God made in creation was people: a man & a woman. He puts them in a garden, and then he gives them a **MISSION**: fill the earth with the image of God (**1:26–28**).
  - ii. But there is a **SNAKE** in the garden. There's an **ENEMY** in God's story who is working to get people to turn their back on God, and he is **the master deceiver**. He shows up in **3:1**, and five verses later Adam & Eve have given in to his lies (**3:6**).
  - iii. So we learn that **PEOPLE** have been rebellious from the very beginning. As you look into the mirror in Genesis, we see that every single one of us is a sinner: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob... you & me.
  - iv. But God makes a **PROMISE** (**3:15**) that He would send a Hero (the Seed of the woman) who would one day crush the head of the snake. However, by the time we get to the end of Genesis, we are still waiting for this Hero.
  - v. In the middle of the story (**12**), God choses a **FAMILY** to be His own special people. And then He **COVENANTS** Himself to this family (**15**) **like a man covenants to his wife**: *for better or worse, no matter what, they will be His people, and He will be their God.*
  - vi. God promised to make their descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky & to give them a land of their own. But the story **ENDS** with this family living in Egypt because of a famine that had devastated the land. Through an incredible story, God made Joseph the most powerful ruler in Egypt next to Pharaoh, and so Joseph's entire family (c. 70 members) was invited to move to Egypt as a **temporary** place to live and raise their families during this world-wide famine.<sup>1</sup>

## EXODUS

Approximately 400 years goes by, and then we open the cover to the book of Exodus...

<sup>6</sup> And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.  
<sup>7</sup> But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly,



<sup>1</sup> Genesis 50:24.

multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

<sup>9</sup> And he said to his people,

“Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;

<sup>10</sup> come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.”

<sup>11</sup> Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens.

And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

<sup>12</sup> But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

<sup>13</sup> So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

<sup>14</sup> And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field.

All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.

~ Exodus 1:6 – 14

This sets the stage for the first half of the book.

- God’s people are now slaves in Egypt, and so *Exodus 1–15* is the story of one of the greatest rescues in human history.<sup>3</sup>
- The second half of Exodus (*16–40*) is about God making a way for His people to worship Him – but since that connects so well with the next book, and so we are going to save those chapters for next week when we look at *Leviticus*.

**If you’ve grown up in the church**, you know the highlights of this incredible story. We just read that...

- Joseph & his brothers have all died (*1:6*), and there is a new pharaoh in the land (*1:8*), and he’s afraid of the Israelites (*1:12*).<sup>4</sup>
- So instead of treating them as honored guests in the land, he turns them into slaves.
- And the more they multiply, the more vicious this Pharaoh becomes. And he becomes one of the most horrific and wicked rulers in history – to the point where God’s chosen family feels like they are in a living hell. And it’s been like this for a very long time.

If we are honest, this raises some really hard questions about the sovereignty of God. Questions like:

- *Has God abandoned His people? Is He powerless to rescue them from their suffering?*

Probably most of us have had times in our life where we’ve questioned God’s presence or power in our lives...

- “Where are you, God? It doesn’t feel like You have any plan for my life right now.”

<sup>2</sup> God was using the land of Egypt to make His promise come true (*Genesis 46:3*). The 70 people who moved to Egypt had grown to well over a million people.

<sup>3</sup> There are other great rescue stories in the Bible. We already read about the God saving Noah & his family from a world-wide flood (*Genesis 7*), and there are many other incredible rescue stories to come (people surrounded by armies; a guy getting thrown into a den of lions; prison’s shaking until the chains fall off and the doors fling open).

<sup>4</sup> This is new name for God’s people. They are the children of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel).

- *It feels like You don't have any power over this thing I'm going through, and You aren't anything like I thought you were...*

It's one thing to say, "Look at how powerful God is in rescuing His people."

But, if God is sovereign and good, how do we explain His people getting into a situation like this in the first place? Why didn't He take them out of Egypt before they became slaves?

God answers this question in **Genesis 15...**

Then He said to Abram:

"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs,

And will serve them,

And they will afflict them four hundred years.

And also the nation whom they serve I will judge;

Afterward they shall come out with great possessions."

~ **Genesis 15:13-14**

**What can we learn from a declaration like this?**

**What do you say to someone who is suffering & struggling to understand what God is doing...of IF He is doing anything at all?**

If all you know of God is what you have learned about Him in Genesis, you could say...

- I don't know why you're suffering, but I know your suffering is not meaningless.
- Your situation is part of a plan that God ordained long before you were ever born.
- He knows. He sees. He has not forgotten you.
- He has declared that the end is going to be even better than the beginning.<sup>5</sup>
- I don't know why God has ordained this prolonged suffering, but I know that He is in control, and I know that He is good.<sup>6</sup>

**Illustration:** When I was 5 years old, I fell out of a tree and ripped my hand open. There're not many things I remember as a 5-year-old, but that was a pretty memorable experience.

- I remember falling out of the tree...
- I remember looking at my hand...
- I remember getting stitches...
- I remember screaming, "*I'm sorry!*" because I thought I was being disciplined.
  - My mind was too young to understand why the doctor was inflicting pain on my hand...and why my parents were holding me down.
  - My mind couldn't comprehend anything good coming from this pain.
  - I couldn't fathom how the doctor was working for my good or how my parents could be holding me down because they loved me.
  - My 5-year-old mind could only comprehend suffering.

If a 5-year-old boy cannot comprehend the ways and the motives of an educated doctor,

<sup>5</sup> We see this same principle in the story of Job which (chronologically) takes place before the Exodus.

<sup>6</sup> Very similar to what Job said.

how much less can created humans understand the ways or the motives of an infinite God?

- We can't!
- Which is why He never asks us to. He only asks us to trust Him.<sup>7</sup>
  - i. *To trust that He is in control.*
  - ii. *That He is good.*
  - iii. *That He is for us.*
  - iv. *That He sees the full picture.*
  - v. *That He knows what He is doing.*
  - vi. *That He is working for His glory and for our everlasting joy.*

For the last 400 years, God has been working. What has He been doing? He's been setting the stage for His glory to be displayed in a show of power that will never be forgotten.

Why are God's people slaves in Egypt? So...

"...that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."  
~ **Exodus 9:16**

That rescue story starts in **chapter 2** with the birth of a boy named Moses. Through a series of miraculous circumstances, Moses ends up spending the first 40 years of his life being raised by Pharaoh's daughter in the palace,<sup>8</sup> and then he spends the next 40 years living as a fugitive in the wilderness of Midian.<sup>9</sup>

- **And then the day came** when God meets Moses on a mountain in the wilderness, and Moses' life would never be the same!
  - i. First, God gets Moses' attention by speaking to him from a bush that was on fire but wasn't burning up (**3:1-6**).
  - ii. He tells Moses that He's heard the cry of His people & that He's coming down to rescue them (**3:7-8**), and Moses is like, "Yes!!! Finally!" And then God says, "I'm sending you" (**3:10**), and Moses is like, "Wait... What?"
  - iii. He calls Moses to go back to Egypt and to stand before Pharaoh (the most powerful ruler on earth) and demand that he let all his Israelite slaves go free (**3:8-10**).
  - iv. But Moses doesn't want to go! So, he gives one excuse after another excuse of why God should choose somebody else for the job (**3:11-4:13**):
    - Why me? I'm a nobody. (**3:11**)
    - What if I don't know what to say? (**3:13**)
    - What if they don't believe me? (**4:1**)
    - I'm not eloquent. I'm not good at talking. (**4:10**)
    - You can send anybody else, but I don't want to go! (**4:13**).

- **I'm just so glad that nobody here at North Center is like that!** 😊

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 3:5-6. "Tears & Glass" by *WeakSide*. "I Trust You" by *Jonathan Traylor*.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 2:1-15.

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 2:15-22.

- For example, if I were to ask the elders to preach, none of them would give me excuses like this.

Here's the thing about our excuses when it comes to God's Word – He doesn't care!

- Because it doesn't matter if you are a nobody.
- It doesn't matter if you don't know what you are going to do or say.
- It doesn't matter whether others believe you.
- It doesn't matter if you have any of the skills that you think are necessary...

If God is calling you to do something, He is all you need.

- He will give you the strength you need in the moment you need it.
- He will give you the words to say when you need to say them.
  - i. He will provide the finances...or the energy...or the grace...or the wisdom...

One of the lessons that Moses would continue to learn throughout the rest of his life is that God is always faithful to His Word, and we can trust Him with every part of our lives.

**So, finally, Moses gives in.** He meets up with his brother Aaron, and they go to Pharaoh together and demand that he let God's people go!

<sup>1</sup> Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh,  
 "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go...'"  
<sup>2</sup> And Pharaoh said,  
 "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?  
 I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go."  
*Exodus 5:1-2*

- Instead of letting God's people go, Pharaoh makes their work even harder (5:6-9)
- Can you imagine how small Moses must have felt? He finally gets the courage to obey God, and what happens? (1) Pharaoh rejects him, and (2) the Israelites hate Moses for making their life even harder than it was before.<sup>10</sup>

So Moses returned to the Lord and said,  
 "Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people?  
 Why is it You have sent me?"  
 ~ *Exodus 5:22*

But God responds by giving Moses one of the greatest promises in the Bible (which is the text our brother Israel read for us earlier)...

<sup>5</sup> And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel  
 whom the Egyptians keep in bondage,  
 and I have remembered My covenant.  
<sup>6</sup> Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the LORD;  
 I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 5:20-21.

I will **rescue** you from their bondage,  
and I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

<sup>7</sup> I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.  
Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God  
who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”  
~ Exodus 6:2–7



**So, for the next eight chapters**, God reigns down one plague after another plague on the Egyptians, but Pharaoh's heart continues to be hardened against God, and he refuses to let God's people go. So, God unleashes a total of **TEN PLAGUES** on Egypt, and by the time it's all over... the kingdom of Egypt is absolutely devastated... **and it never recovered.**

**Q.** If you've never studied this story, you might wonder why God brings so much devastation on the land before He finally rescues His people?

**A.** Because He is making it known to the entire world that there is no god in the universe that compares with Him.<sup>11</sup>

I remember the first time I learned that every plague was a specific & clear demonstration of God's power over the gods that were being worshiped in Egypt.

1. God turns all the waters to **blood** (7:14–25) | **Hapi, god of the Nile**
  - a. And all the fish in the river die (7:18)
2. He sends **frogs** to invade the land (8:1–15) | **Heket**, goddess with a frog head
  - a. The frogs were everywhere: bedroom, on your bed, in your oven, in your bread bowls... (8:3)
3. He turned the dust of the land into **lice** (3:16–19) | **Geb**, god of the earth
4. He caused swarms of **flies** to invade the land (3:20–32) | **Khepri**, god with a fly head
  - a. The houses were full of swarms of flies (8:21)
5. He put a **disease** on all of the Egyptians livestock (9:1–7) | **Hathor**, goddess w/ cow head
  - a. Cattle, horses, donkey, camels, oxen, sheep (9:3)
6. He caused the all the Egyptians to be covered in **boils** that would break out in sores (9:8–12) | **Isis**, goddess of medicine & peace
7. He rained down very heavy **hail** mingled with fire across the land of Egypt (9:13–35)
  - a. It ruined every crop and broke every tree (9:25) | **Nut**, goddess of the sky
8. He covered the land with **locust**, and they consumed everything that remained from the hailstorm (10:1–20) | **Seth**, god of storms & disorder
  - a. The covered the face of the earth, so that no one could even see the ground or the floor in their own homes (10:5–6)
9. He caused a **darkness** to stretch across the land (10:21–29) | **Ra, god of the sun**
  - a. The darkness was so thick that it could be felt (10:21)
10. He killed every **firstborn** who wasn't protected by the blood of a lamb (11:1–30)
  - a. God provided a way of escape from this plague, but nobody in Egypt listened. So “there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead” (12:30). **Pharaoh, god of the Egyptians**

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 15:11.

I want to pause for a minute and look at this last plague because it is one of the most important scenes in the book of Exodus, and it becomes one of the most important moments in the entire Bible.

Remember last week, we looked at that story in *Genesis 22* where Abraham told Isaac that God would provide a lamb (22:8), and then we saw how Abraham's promise was pointing forward to Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (*John 1:29*).

Well, here in *Exodus 12*, instead of promising the Lamb, God gives a picture of what will happen when He finally does provide the Lamb.

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb.  
<sup>22</sup> And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.  
<sup>23</sup> For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.  
<sup>24</sup> And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.  
~ *Exodus 12:21-24*

Here's the scene:

- An innocent lamb is killed.
- The door of their home is covered in its blood.
- So, when the destroyer comes to bring death throughout the land, he will see the blood on the door, and he will know that death has already come to this house.
- And so He will **pass over**.
- Nobody in that home will die because a lamb has already died in their place.
- The Jews have continued to celebrate this moment of rescue and redemption ever since in a yearly celebration called, "*Passover*," but so many of them have entirely missed the point. *The point is Jesus.*

Brothers and sisters, do you see Jesus here?

- In the Garden of Eden, God told Adam & Eve that the price of sin was death.<sup>12</sup>
- And so every single one of us deserves death because every single one of us has sinned.<sup>13</sup>
- But that's not how our story has to end...

Because **1,500 hundred years later...**

- On the day of the Passover
- An innocent Lamb was killed



<sup>12</sup> Genesis 2:17. Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the Romans (6:23)

<sup>13</sup> Romans 3:23.



- And everybody who comes to this Lamb is covered by His blood.

The Apostle Peter writes that we have been redeemed

“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”  
 ~ *1 Peter 1:19*

- Which means that when death comes, it will have no power over you
- Because it will see the blood of Christ covering your heart and know that death has already happened on your behalf.
- If Christ is your home, you are safe.
  - Not because you are good. Not because you’ve earned God’s favor.*
  - Not because you’ve been baptized or said a certain prayer.*

You are safe **because** the Lamb of God died in your place.

**So how does the Exodus story end?**

- Pharaoh tells the Israelites to leave (*12:31–32*).
- But they don’t leave empty-handed! God makes sure that the Egyptians give them everything they will need for the journey ahead (*12:35–36*)
- Then He leads them out by going before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (*13:21*).
- But God has one more demonstration of sovereign power before His people celebrate their salvation.
- Pharaoh quickly regrets his decision to let the Israelites go, and so he sends every chariot in Egypt to go get them (*14:5–8*).
- So there’s this final climactic scene where God’s people are almost free, but they’re trapped between Pharaoh’s army on one side and the Red Sea on the other side.
- Here in this final showdown between the God of Israel and the King of Egypt, God parts the waters of the Red Sea so that His people can walk across on dry land, but then He sends the water crashing back down on the Egyptians (*14:13–16, 27*).<sup>14</sup>

Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt;  
 So the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.  
 ~ *Exodus 14:31*

And there on the shore of the Red Sea (**chapter 15**), Moses leads God’s people in the first song recorded in the Bible. It’s a song about a God who rescues and redeems His people and how God became their salvation.

They had no idea, standing on the shore that day, that 3,500 years later...

- We would be retelling their story
- That we would be celebrating God’s power to rescue His people from sin & slavery

<sup>14</sup> “Still” by Hillary Scott & the Scott Family



- And that we too would be singing, “How Great is Our God” because we have learned that we can trust Him even when we don’t understand what’s He’s doing.