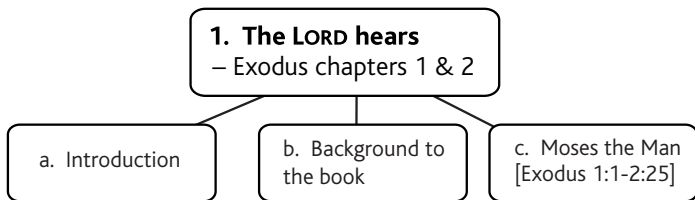


Study 1 The LORD hears

EXODUS CHAPTERS 1 & 2

Key Truth: The story of Moses takes us to the deepest truths in the Bible and shows us the Gospel of the Promised Messiah.

**a. Introduction**

Why study the book of Exodus when we have the New Testament?

Exodus is the most *theological* book of the Bible.

The book of Exodus provides the theological framework for the rest of the Bible.

Genesis set the scene for the whole Bible – but Exodus maps out the theological logic, the doctrinal details of the Bible.

The story of the people of God being rescued from Egypt through the judgement of God is a foundation pattern for the way in which they looked forward to the Messiah delivering them from the power of sin and the devil. As they saw how He redeemed them from Egypt, so they were strengthened in their faith in Him to redeem them from sin, death and the devil.

Jesus died at the Feast of Passover. This is a very significant part of the death of Jesus and its meaning is established by the events of the book



of Exodus. The death of Jesus rests upon the book of Exodus for its theological explanation.

The entire creation, in both its aspects – heaven and earth – is explained by the framework given in the book of Exodus. We understand how the heavens and the earth relate, how sin has affected this relationship and how they will be redeemed, as we study the Tabernacle later on in Exodus.

The Tabernacle is the single most important building that the world has ever known, because it is the building that maps out the whole of reality to us. We understand the universe because of it.

Exodus gives us a wonderful presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity. As we see the Angel of God redeeming His people we are given a clear picture of the roles of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When we look back at how the Christians of earlier generations understood the book of Exodus, we are shown the great depths of this majestic book of Moses. Matthew Henry tells us that it shows us the forming of the children of Israel into a church, and “shadows forth the state of the church, in the wilderness of this world, until her arrival at the heavenly Canaan”.

While we are thinking of those older Christian books, you will find the Old Testament people of God referred to as ‘the Church’. Some people find this strange because they are used to thinking of ‘church’ as a New Testament word only. However, speaking of the Church in the Old Testament is true to Scripture because several times in Exodus in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, the Israelite community is called ‘*ekklesia*’ (the Greek word for ‘church’).

The events of this book and the fulfilment of the many prophecies made to Abraham which we will see unfold here did not happen in a secret place. They occupied centre-stage in world history. We are reminded that these events were the topic of discussion in all the surrounding nations of the world (Exodus 32:12,25). The events of Exodus often made the news headlines every day.

This is a book that demands our attention. If we can grasp something of the “Exodus treasure chest” we will find our understanding of the world, the Bible and life is taken to a new level.

b. Background to the book

'Exodus' is simply the Latin form of Greek 'ex *hodos*' meaning 'exit' or 'going out'.

It is clear that Exodus immediately follows on from Genesis. The Hebrew title for 'Exodus' (*we'elleh shemoth*, Lit., 'And these are the names of') is the same phrase that appears in Genesis 46:8.

The book begins by summarizing what has happened since the end of Genesis. From being the most popular people in Egypt, creators of the state of Egypt and the power of the Pharaoh through Joseph, the Church had become despised and persecuted, subject to harsh working conditions. Later on, during their wanderings in the wilderness, they longed to return to Egypt (Num 11:5 for example), but the Bible makes it clear that slavery, whether in Egypt or in sin, is terrible.

The new king was an ignorant, arrogant fool, v 8-9. We are not even told his name, even though we are told the names of two midwives. Although the Israelites had only done Egypt good, and benefited the nation, (see Genesis 47:20-27), he was suspicious of them in an entirely racist way. 'Pithom', where they lived, v 11, means "the fortress of foreigners".

However, verse 12, the more the Church was persecuted, the more it expanded. This expansion may not only have been through birth. There were also Egyptians who lived among the Israelites and we see marriages between Egyptians and Israelites (Leviticus 24:10).

The Church was definitely bringing foreigners in, and we will see that it was a racially international group that set out as the 'church in the wilderness'.

However, it is expansion due to procreation that Pharaoh decides to tackle first. He calls in the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah (Beautiful) and Puah (Splendid). Pharaoh wanted them to murder all the baby boys. These two midwives must have been very busy servicing a population of some 2-3 million – the Israelites had grown in number from around 70 to 2-3 million, in 10 generations! This is perhaps why they were able to say what they did in verse 19. They must have been racing around from one home to another and we can see why they might be late arriving at the births given the pressure they must have



been under! God approved of the midwives 'going slow' in civil disobedience and gave them plenty of babies of their own.

c. Moses the Man (Exodus 1:1-2:25)

Moses is the most humble man who has ever lived apart from Jesus, Numbers 12:3.

Why? Well, we need to appreciate how 'full of himself' he might have been. He had been in the family of Pharaoh, the ruler of the world's great superpower. It is possible that Moses could have become Pharaoh if he had that ambition. He received the best education that the world had to offer. Power, money, influence and prestige all belonged to him. In turning from that world, he became a prince in spiritual things. Moses had become a close friend of the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, Exodus 33:11, and was personally buried by Him, Deuteronomy 34:6. The Law, that provided the theological context for the next 1500 years of the Church, was given through him. Many people with less than 1% of Moses' experiences make careers out of telling their stories. However, Moses was amazingly humble and self-sacrificial.

The book of Exodus takes us through the first 80 years of this extraordinary man. We see him commissioned as an apostle of the Angel of the Lord and we see how he matures into the passionate administrator of the Law and the Tabernacle that he is in the book of Leviticus.

Amram, a member of the tribe of Levi, and descendant of Kohath, Exodus 6:20, had married Jochebed, who belonged to the same tribe. They had already had two children, Miriam and Aaron. The birth of their next child not only won their hearts, but seemed to point him out as destined of God for some special purpose – "He was no ordinary child", Acts 7:20.

Moses' mother saved him by casting him into the Nile (as ordered!), but placed him in an 'ark'. This is the same word in the Hebrew as the ark built by Noah. Just as Noah was delivered from the killing water by an ark, so is Moses. He is given his name which means 'Saved', because he had been 'saved' from the Nile. Where many boys were being thrown into the river to be killed, here is one drawn out to have life. There is so much similarity between the births of Moses and Jesus, particularly the massacre of the baby boys. However, to make the difference clear, he is not called Jesus (Saviour) but Moses (Saved).

As we noted, Moses was in the family of the leader of the world's super power. All the treasures of the world awaited him. All his worldly desires could be satisfied but he turned them all down for Christ (Hebrews 11:26).

Moses is often given a very bad press as being a murderer. Yet, this is not the way that the Bible presents him. We tend to see him as merely sinful when we read Exodus 2, yet in Acts 7:23-28 Stephen reminds us of the proper perspective to have as we read Exodus. Stephen shows us that Moses knew that he was the one sent to deliver the Church from the captivity of Egypt – even before the burning bush encounter where the Angel of the Lord tells him this. Perhaps Moses was assuming the Israelites would rise up and leave Egypt once he had begun the revolution! The fact that they didn't trust in what the LORD was doing through Moses meant that a whole generation of Israelites (40 years) had to remain in captivity to endure worse persecution. That pattern of '40 years punishment for sin' is played out in the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the Bible. Nevertheless, Moses just can't help being a rescuer and a pastor, Exodus 2:19.

In 2:15, Moses runs away to the land of the Midianites – the very people who had taken Joseph down to Egypt in the first place. He meets Jethro, who is the priest of Midian. We are not told *how* Jethro is a priest when the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood had not yet been established, but we do know he is a man of great theological depth and wisdom.

The father-in-law of Moses worshipped the God of Abraham, as his name states: *Reuel*, the 'friend of El'. He became Moses' spiritual teacher through these 40 years. However, they seem to have been long years of depression for Moses. Although Zipporah bore a son, Moses betrayed his loneliness by naming his son Gershom, "I have become an alien in a foreign land", v 22 (Gershom means 'alien').

From being at the top of the world to spending 40 years in the desert, leading sheep around, were there many times that he simply assumed that his life had been wasted, that the LORD had nothing for him to do?

Everything seems to be hopeless here for God's people. But, there is always hope with the God of Resurrection from the dead. Exodus 2:23-25.



Study 1 Bible Study Questions

Exodus chapter 1

1. Verses 1-7: The Israelites were living in Egypt and growing as a people there. How did they come to be there in the first place? (Genesis 47:11-12)
2. Verses 8-14: Joseph was the second most powerful and influential man in Egypt whilst he was alive, yet the new Pharaoh knew nothing of him. What does that tell us about fame and importance? What should we be aiming for in our lives?
3. Joseph is quickly forgotten in Egypt, however, he is remembered throughout the rest of the Bible and he is held as an example to Christians all over the world today. How can this be an encouragement as we live Christian lives in the world? What is the audience that we should really be concerned about.
4. Verses 15-21: What kind of danger do you think they were putting themselves into by disobeying Pharaoh? What does this tell us about the relationship the midwives had with the Lord?
5. As Christians, we will doubtless face many situations where our faith conflicts with what the world expects or demands from us. What can we learn about those kind of situations from the story of the midwives? How does the Lord look on such faith?
6. Verse 22: Can you see some similarities between the birth of Moses and the birth of Jesus in Matthew 2? In what ways would both Moses and Jesus lead their people out of slavery?

Study 1: Further Questions

1. How is it that God blessed the two Hebrew midwives when they lied to Pharaoh? Does this mean it is okay to lie so long as we have good intentions?
2. How could Jethro have been a priest? Is there any significance in the fact that he was a shepherd and a priest?
3. Why is it *ironic* that Moses calls his son 'Gershom' (alien)? What situation has he fled from?

Study 1 Daily Readings

Day 1	Genesis 47:11-31
Day 2	Exodus 1
Day 3	Exodus 2
Day 4	Matthew 2
Day 5	Acts 7:17-29
Day 6	Psalms 90 (a psalm of Moses)
Day 7	Hebrews 11

The daily Bible readings are an opportunity not only to read through all of the material in the book under study, but also to read parts of the Bible that relate to the themes and issues that we have been considering. We try to make sure that we receive light from the whole Bible as we think through the key issues each week.