

# The Birth of a Saviour

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, in the news in this past week, we have seen the violent clashes in Sudan, and we prayed for that earlier. Fighting has erupted in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, as a result of a vicious power struggle within the country's military leadership.

And many people have been killed, many people have been wounded, many are missing, and many have fled the country. And millions remain trapped in the capital Khartoum, where food is running short and people need to escape and to get out.

One of the news reports I watched this week, the other night, a man described what was going on and what needed to happen as being a mass exodus. A mass exodus.

And we often use that phrase, a mass exodus, to describe people needing to leave or people needing to get out. And so today, as we begin this study in the book of Exodus, the word exodus, which is the title for the book, means exit.

It means departure. And because exodus really is about God bringing his people out of their slavery in Egypt and bringing them to safety.

[ 1 : 13 ] That is the exodus. And so exodus, essentially, is about a great rescue. And this is a defining moment for God's people. It is a defining moment in God's purposes for the world.

Exodus is the great rescue story of the Old Testament. And so it teaches us about God's way of salvation, of how God saves.

It tells us of a God of love who sets people free from slavery so that they might serve him. And so it gives great hope of freedom.

Because we know that there is something wrong with our world. And we know that there is something wrong with our lives. We're confronted all around us with brokenness, with suffering, with pain, with slavery, and with death.

And we need a way out. We need freedom from everything that spoils our lives. And it's obvious from the news we see in politics.

[ 2 : 14 ] We see in society, in films, and in books. We need saving from something. We're trapped. We're held captive. We're in bondage. We're enslaved.

And that's why the book of Exodus is good news for us. It's good news for our world. Because it touches upon the deepest longings of our hearts. And us all for freedom.

And for, ultimately, salvation. And so Exodus points us to the God who saves. And that's why we're calling our series The God Who Saves. Because God reveals himself in Exodus as the God who saves.

And that's why, as we read Exodus together, we will hear echoes of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. Because God's rescue of the Israelites from their oppressive slavery in Egypt anticipates a greater rescue from slavery to sin that is accomplished in Jesus Christ.

And so Exodus sheds light on the whole Bible story of God's purposes for this world. And so as we get started in Exodus, let me just give some brief words of introduction.

[ 3 : 27 ] First of all, we'll think about the author of Exodus. Exodus was written by Moses. And it's part of the Pentateuch, which is the first five books of the Bible.

And the Pentateuch is essentially the foundation upon which the rest of the Bible story comes from. The date of the Exodus, well, it depends on when the Exodus from Egypt happened.

But it is a true account of the delivery of God's people from their slavery as they move towards the Promised Land. And it happened somewhere around three and a half thousand years ago.

What about the content? Well, of course, Moses features heavily in the story of the Exodus. But the real hero of the Exodus story is God, because it tells us how God saves his people from slavery, how God enters into a covenant relationship with them, and how God dwells with them so that his

people might worship him.

What about the structure of Exodus? Well, Exodus reveals the God who saves, and it comes in three parts. So chapters 1 to 18, we read about the God who delivers his people.

[ 4 : 41 ] So 1 to 18, God delivers his people. He miraculously delivers his chosen people from their slavery in Egypt. Then chapters 19 to 24, we read about the God who demands from his people.

God gives his people the law, or the Ten Commandments, and he enters into a covenant relationship with them at Mount Sinai. And he demands their obedience for this relationship to work. So the God who delivers, chapters 1 to 18. Then the God who demands, chapters 19 to 24. And then the third chunk of Exodus is the God who dwells with his people, chapters 25 to 40.

So God instructs his people to build the tabernacle, which is like a big tent where God would dwell. And it would give his people a place where they could enter into his presence and worship him.

And so you might be asking, well, what has the Exodus got to do with us? It's got everything to do with us, whether we call ourselves a Christian or not. Because Exodus doesn't just tell us the story of God's rescue of his people from slavery in Egypt long ago, as they moved towards the promised land.

[ 5 : 59 ] Exodus gives us a picture. It gives us a pattern, if you like, of the Bible story of God's rescue of his people from slavery to sin, as he moves us towards the heavenly promised land in the future.

And all of that happens and comes together in the person of Jesus Christ. And so if we want to get a handle on Exodus, the whole book, remember those three things.

Chapters 1 to 18, the God who delivers. Chapters 19 to 24, the God who demands. Chapters 25 to 40, the God who dwells with his people. So today we're going to look at chapters 1 and 2.

We'll go through the book taking fairly sizable chunks and study these together. And so today we're going to look at three things in particular and see three ways how God does his saving work.

First of all, there's the seeming silence of God, chapter 1. Then secondly, the strange surprises of God, chapter 2, verse 1 to 22. And then thirdly, the supreme salvation of God, chapter 2 at the end, verse 23 to 25.

[ 7 : 11 ] Okay, so first of all, the seeming silence of God. Exodus chapter 1 tells how the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. They were oppressed and they were suffering and their situation was getting worse instead of better.

And so if they were God's people, then where was God and what was God doing? Well, Exodus begins, verses 1 to 7 of chapter 1, with a reference to the family of Joseph, who ended up in Egypt. Which means Exodus is a continuation of the book of Genesis, because Genesis ended with Joseph's death. In fact, the original Hebrew of the book of Exodus begins with the word and, to emphasize this.

So we're being told that God is faithful in keeping his promises to his people. Because back in Genesis, God made a covenant with Abraham, chapter 12 and chapter 15.

And he said he would make Abraham into a great nation. And yet as Exodus begins, there's still a family that numbered 70 people, we're told in verse 5.

[ 8 : 24 ] But included as a part of God's promise to Abraham, he said that his descendants would be strangers in a country that wasn't their own. And that they would be enslaved and ill-treated there for 400 years.

But part of God's covenant promise was that he would punish the nation that made them slaves and he would set them free and bless them. But 400 years is a long time.

And so Exodus begins with a family who are then to become a nation. And yet their suffering intensifies under the brutal rule of the king of Egypt.

And so when we get to the end of chapter 1, we read in verse 22, Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people, Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.

And so Pharaoh's policy is to order every Egyptian citizen to engage in genocide. And so the chapter ends in suspense as we're wondering, well, what is going to happen next?

[ 9 : 33 ] It seemed like God was silent. And life can sometimes seem that way, can't it? As if God is silent. As if nothing is happening.

And things in our lives seem to be getting worse instead of better. And we just don't understand why. And what we see here is that that never means that God is somehow taking his eye off the ball.

Or that God has even dropped the ball. Or that things are out of control, whether in the world or in society, in his church or in our lives. Because Exodus chapter 1 reminds us that God's purposes are never derailed.

And that God is working to his timetable and nobody else's. And that God is always faithful to his people, even if he seems silent.

And this is beautifully expressed in three little verses that drive the narrative of chapter 1 forward. And we see it as we read of God's people increasing and multiplying.

[10:39] So verse 7 says, But the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful. They multiplied greatly, increased in numbers, and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

So Pharaoh then tried to make them work harder. And then we read in verse 12, But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread. So the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.

So Pharaoh tried to get two Hebrew midwives to then kill all the babies. And the midwives feared God and ignored Pharaoh's command. And so we read verse 20, So God was kind to the midwives, and the people increased and became even more numerous.

So at each turn of events, it's clear that it isn't Pharaoh who is in charge here. God is. And it isn't Pharaoh's will that is being done.

It's God's will that is being done. And it's all because God is keeping his promises to his people. And so this increase of the Israelites is more than merely just telling us that Abraham's family is growing, which it was.

[11:49] Abraham's family, which then became Jacob's family, which then became Joseph's family. It was becoming a nation. And yet, this is what God had promised would happen.

He promised it when he made his covenant with Abraham. And yet God's promise goes even further back than his covenant with Abraham. It goes all the way back, in fact, to the story of creation when God commanded Adam and Eve.

Remember Genesis chapter 1. Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. And so Exodus picks up on those very words from the beginning of the Bible about being fruitful and about multiplying.

Because God is not only being faithful to his covenant promises to Abraham, but God is being faithful to his plan for humanity. God is accomplishing his purposes despite the oppression of his people.

And so we're meant to get the point that God is faithful to his promises. And that God is working out his purposes even if he seems to be silent.

[13:05] He is God. He has been faithful in all that he has said in the past. And so that means we can trust that he will be faithful in all that we face in the present.

And we can be certain that he is working out everything for the future. For this world. For this world. For our society. For our society. In his church and in his lives.

God knows what he's doing. And so Exodus is wanting us to learn who God is and what God is like. To see how God works. God has revealed his ways to us.

So that we can know him. He's revealed his promises to us. So that we can trust him. And he wants to show us that he will fulfill his promises.

He will do all that he has said. And we need to know that because we will be confused. We will be caught out if we forget what God is like.

[14:10] If we don't know God, then we probably will struggle more in life. We wonder why things are the way they are. We might think, why does God seem silent when all of this is going on?

And yet what we're learning here is that God is never silent. God is God. And God is at work. And God is faithful to all that he has promised that he would do.

And so when we belong to him, we can trust him. We can trust that he knows what he's doing. And so that's the first point, the seeming silence of God. The second point is the strange surprises of God.

And this takes us into chapter 2. So the people of Israel are opposed. We see that. But chapter 2 speaks about the birth of their savior, Moses. And so we get the infant Moses in verse 1 to 10 of chapter 2.

And then we get the man Moses in verses 11 to 22 of chapter 2. And the narrative here is full of surprise, full of irony, full of humor, and full of tension.

[15:19] So Pharaoh wants to get rid of every Hebrew baby boy. And yet the irony is that the liberator of God's people from Egypt actually grew up in Pharaoh's household.

So God works here in many surprising ways to prepare Moses for his role as the savior of his people. And so when Moses was born, we read his parents hid him in a basket in the Nile. And who should just happen to bathe in the Nile and see the basket in the reeds? Well, none other than Pharaoh's daughter. And so the whole account is full of emotion.

Because Pharaoh's daughter feels pity and she keeps the baby. And then his sister offers to get somebody to nurse the Hebrew baby boy. And it's his mother who's given the responsibility of looking after him.

She gets to look after her own son. And she's paid for the privilege. And so despite the danger and despite the risk, Moses was the safest baby boy in all of Egypt.

[16:27] He was raised as the privileged and protected prince of Egypt. And the Prince of Egypt is a great film, by the way. If you've never seen it, you do need to watch it. So this is all the work of the God who saves.

And then Moses becomes a man. And Moses doesn't forget his people. And that's why he was prepared to kill an Egyptian who was beating one of his own, in verse 11 and 12.

And it's like Moses makes this early attempt to save God's people. And yet it backfires on him. And he needs to flee from Pharaoh and flee from Egypt.

And so despite all the potential that has been building in the story, in verse 1 to 10, it all seems to come to nothing, in verse 11 to 22. Where the only rescue that Moses managed was the rescue of these seven Midianite girls from some shepherds.

And so the disappointment for Moses is summed up in the name that he gives his son. In verse 22. Zipporah gave birth to a son and Moses named him Gershom, saying, I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.

[17:42] So Moses is a foreigner because his true home isn't Egypt. It isn't Midian. His true home is the land that God promised Abraham.

And so, of course, the story isn't over yet. The story of God's rescue, in a sense, is only just beginning. And we're meant to pick up on the clues through the story about how God is going to save his people through Moses.

And so the basket that Moses was put in as a baby is literally called an ark in the original Hebrew. Now, where else in the Bible do you read about an ark?

The only place in the Bible you read about an ark is the flood in Genesis chapters 6 to 9. And so this is just a hint that just as God saved Noah through the ark, so he is going to save Moses through an ark in the same way.

And also, Moses was placed among the reeds on the bank of the River Nile. Did you hear that? And the reeds link to the so-called Sea of Reeds, or the Red Sea, through which Israel would eventually be saved.

[19:02] And so the baby left in the reeds, in the River Nile, would later lead his people in victory through the Red Sea, the Reed Sea.

And so all of these are clues that are pointing us to God's saving work, to God's sometimes surprising saving work. And so even in those darkest moments when evil seemed to triumph, and when God's people were oppressed and were enslaved, God was working to save his people. Even displaying his sense of humor in how he does it. One commentator says this, he says, And so Exodus begins with God preparing Moses to move his purposes forward.

Not just for Israel, but to move his purposes forward for the world. Because God saved Moses so that he could save Israel, so that ultimately, as part of God's one salvation plan, he could save you and me.

And so just think, at that one moment in history, all those thousands of years ago, a small part of God's salvation plan was bobbing up and down, and the crocodile infested River Nile in a tiny basket.

[20:42] God often works in surprising ways, doesn't he? But this is how God accomplishes his salvation. And that's why, as we read these early chapters of Exodus, we see the divine fingerprints all over the story.

Because God is revealing himself to us as the God who saves, and who will save his people. So that's our second point, the strange surprises of God.

The seeming silence of God, the strange surprises of God, and then thirdly, the supreme salvation of God. Now, these opening chapters of Exodus cover so many years of Israelite history, and then the pace of the book speeds up, and happens in just a short space of time.

But you notice in these opening chapters that God is hardly mentioned in the narrative, until at the end of chapter 2, when God then takes on center stage. And so the narrative tells us, at the end of chapter 2, that God is the hope for his people.

Let's read verse 23 to 25 again. During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.

[ 22 : 01 ] God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

Now, in the original Hebrew text, God is the subject of four active verbs. So it literally says, God heard, God remembered, God saw, and God knew.

First of all, God heard their groaning. So he listened to his people, and he would respond to their need. And then secondly, God remembered his covenant.

So did God somehow forget that he entered into a covenant with his people, and that his memory was jogged again when they prayed to him? Oh yeah, Israel.

I think I remember entering into a covenant with them back in the day. Forgot about that. Maybe I should do something about it now. No, God didn't forget the promises that he had made to his people, because when we read God remembered his covenant, it means that God is now acting upon what he had said.

[ 23 : 13 ] God will do what he had promised. God was going to save his people from their slavery in Egypt, not because they deserved it, not even because of their crying out to God in prayer, but God would save them because of his covenant.

And so their exodus in Egypt was rooted in what God had promised to Abraham, and God would never abandon his people.

So God heard, God remembered, God saw the people of Israel. And obviously God could see their desperate plight, but God looked on them with love and with compassion, and he would help them. And then God knew. Of course God knew. But God understood fully what was happening. He knew about the suffering. He knew about their slavery.

And he was going to set them free. Because the people of Israel couldn't save themselves. God was their only hope of salvation. And God is also our only hope of salvation today, because we can't save ourselves.

[ 24 : 27 ] And so the God who sent Moses to be the savior of his people, because of a promise he made to Abraham, back in Genesis chapter 15, is the same God who sent Jesus Christ to be our savior, because of a promise he made back in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis chapter 3.

Remember when God said to the serpent, Satan, and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

So God promised to send a savior, a serpent crusher, who would come to save his people. And so while the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt is highlighted for us, especially in chapter 1, verse 13 to 14, and then at the end of chapter 2, it's highlighted to us, because essentially they were serving a cruel slave master called Pharaoh.

But the Exodus opens up a window onto our slavery to sin. Because Jesus said, in John chapter 8, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

And then he said, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. And so whether we are aware of it or not, whether we think about it or not, we are enslaved to sin, all of us.

[ 25 : 55 ] And we need to be set free. We are under a cruel slave master, Satan, instead of the loving God.

We are enslaved. We are in bondage. We are held captive, like the Israelites, like the people in Sudan. And yet you might be thinking, well, I'm not a slave.

What do I need to be set free from? I am free. And yet we are enslaved to all kinds of sins, sinful behavior, sinful habits, ways of living that are destructive to us, even if we don't want to admit it. It could be a relationship, or work, or money, or sex, or an addiction, like drink, or drugs, or pornography. And we may feel that we need to be set free.

