



## Exodus (Part 1) – Our Story in Exodus

Matt Chandler – August 21, 2016

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[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. This story began several thousand years ago, and it began with a promise from God to Abraham that he would make his offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky, a great nation who would one day dwell in the Promised Land.

More than 400 years passed, and Abraham's descendants had not seen this promise fulfilled. Instead, the Israelites lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. Fearing the Hebrews would grow into a mighty nation and overtake them, the pharaoh of Egypt forced them to work as slaves. But Israel continued to grow.

In response, the Egyptians increased their oppression of God's people, and Pharaoh gave a terrible decree. Every son born to the Hebrews would be thrown into the river. But a Levite couple defied this order, trusting God's will for their son's life, and God *did* have a plan for this child. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and took pity on him. She named him Moses because he was drawn out of the water.

As Moses grew older and saw the suffering of his people, anger burned within him. When he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the man and fled Egypt to hide in the desert. Years passed, and Moses made a new life for himself in Midian. Then, one day the voice of the Lord called out to him from a burning bush. God told Moses that he saw the persecution of his people in Egypt, and he heard their cries. He promised to deliver the Israelites from slavery, and he commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh on their behalf.

Moses was terrified, so God sent Moses' brother Aaron to go with him. The brothers went before Pharaoh performing signs and wonders, but Pharaoh would not listen. So God brought down plagues upon Egypt, yet Pharaoh's heart remained hard as stone. To prepare for the tenth and final plague, the Hebrews marked their doors with the blood of spotless lambs. That night the angel of death passed through the kingdom, killing the firstborn child of every Egyptian household that did not bear the mark, including Pharaoh's.

Heartbroken, Pharaoh told the Israelites to go. They were finally set free. The Spirit of God led the people out and toward the Promised Land, but Pharaoh's grief soon turned to rage. He changed his mind and then commanded the Egyptian army to pursue them. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, Moses lifted his staff to the sky, and the waters parted. The Hebrews passed through the towering waves, and the Egyptians were swallowed by the sea.

God had indeed drawn his people out of bondage, out of darkness, and into the light of his presence. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out of our sin, our Egypt, and draws us into his presence into relationship with him.

[End of video]

**Matt Chandler:** If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Exodus, chapter 1. I don't think I need to say anything else. I could just pray, and we could be done, as that was the first 15 chapters done beautifully for me by our communications team. If you don't have a Bible with you, grab one. There should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. We're going to read quite a bit of text today. I want you to be able to kind of follow along with us as we do that.

I want to start right out of the gate by answering why in the world we're going to look at the book of Exodus for the next 9-11 months. Okay? If you are like me and you're looking at all there is going on in the world and maybe even all there is going on in your own life, in your own relationships, what you have going on at work, what you have going on in your finances, you're like, "Why in the world? Why wouldn't we do like 10 weeks on marriage? I mean, that would make sense, not 11 months on Exodus. What in the world does Exodus have to do with you and me here in 2016?"

Now I was hoping you would ask that. Here's my answer. My answer is the book of Exodus is ultimately about God. That's what the book of Exodus is about. A right understanding and a right view of who God is shapes and affects every felt need we can imagine.

If you've come in here, and you're like, "Gosh! I really would've appreciated a series on anxiety," or, "I really would've appreciated a series on how to overcome addiction or what to do with fear or how to address doubt," what I want to say to you is Exodus is going to help us get underneath all of that and give us a view of God that can transcend those things and give us a confidence in the God of the Bible.

It's a paltry understanding of God that leads to so many of the ills in our hearts, in our relationships with one another, so that a right understanding of who God is is primary and is the primary pursuit of those who are serious about life.

With that said, let me tell you a little bit about Exodus. Exodus is the second book of five books called the *Pentateuch*. Now you're probably not going to say that much this week, so let's try to wrap that really quickly. Say *Pentateuch* for me. Just like a bunch of scholars. All right. *Pentateuch* literally means book of five.

What's happening here is this is the second of five books that was meant to be taken as a singular narrative, so Exodus isn't a story unto itself, but actually it's a chapter of a bigger story. I would contend that the more you proof text or pull just 10 verses out of *this* or two verses out of *this*, the more you unintentionally misrepresent or malign the nature and character of God.

Any time you hear an unbeliever (someone who is aggressive toward the Christian faith) point out the wickedness of God in the Old Testament, they have always, always, always proof text. They have pulled an event outside of a massive story, and they've tried to highlight that event to mean something about the nature and character of God that when placed *inside* the story simply cannot be true.

N.T. Wright would explain it like this: "The Bible was not primarily written in order to be read in 10-verse chunks. We have cut the Bible down to size. Now, obviously there are some bits like the Psalms and like some passages—the book of James is written in very short bursts—but most of [the Bible], including Paul's letters and certainly the Gospels and certainly great books like Isaiah, and so on, are read in order to be experienced the way you experience a symphony.

Imagine if you were to a concert and you got the first 10 bars of Beethoven's Fifth and then the conductor turned around and said, 'Okay, that's all for this week. Come back the same time next week, and we'll have the next 10 bars.' You would think, 'Wait...'" What Wright is lamenting is the way we read our Bibles and miss out on the beauty of the narrative arc of what God is accomplishing.

It's why we gave you a couple of months ago just kind of a reading list of Genesis so you could begin to read through the book of Genesis that is so tied to Exodus. In fact, Exodus begins with the word, "Now..." Or, "And..." Who begins a book with *now* or *and*? It's because it's viewed as really kind of the second part of five parts of one story. Ultimately if you haven't read Genesis, no need to panic. It's still there. You can go back and grab that at another point.

I'll tell you what we did for you. Because we love you, we gave you an overview of Genesis in your Exodus guide because we think it's hard to understand Exodus fully without understanding *some* of what occurred in Genesis, if not *all* that happened in Genesis. Let me tell you how we plan on kind of attacking this book (in the good sense of that word *attacking*).

We are going to spend today through Advent (so through the last weekend before Christmas) looking at chapters 1 through 15. Then when we're done with that, we're going to take a break in January and do our normal month of prayer in January. We'll come back in February, and from February more than likely to the end of May (we might inch into June or maybe take the whole month of June), we'll cover chapters 16 through 40.

If you're like, "That's a lot," I know. All right? I know! I know! I know and yet fully confident in our time together in these things. That's our hope. The communications team has just crushed this. We've been working on this for...gosh...seven, eight months now. From that video to what we handed you when you walked in, there's everything from family devotional ideas to small group notes to resources for further study to we built a website that has an interactive map that has all sorts of things to help us as a community dive fully into this great story that is our story, ultimately.

Again, don't leave these in your car. I love you. Don't leave them in your car. Okay? Just take it in the house and put it where you put the stuff you actually use, not that place where you just have stuff and you're not even quite sure what's in that stuff until somebody is coming over for dinner and

you start to clean. Don't put it there. Put it with the stuff you use. Okay? Then dive in. They did an incredible job in all of this.

With that said, I want you to feel some of that symphony in our first time together in Exodus. I want you to get a sense of what we're going through and what we will be going through this fall into the early winter. Here's my plan. I've asked four members of the church to serve as readers today. What they're going to do is they're going to come out, and they're going to read chunks of Exodus.

Nikki is going to come out, and she is going to read Exodus 1 and 2. Then I'll just stand right over here. Then I'm going to explain kind of a theme we're seeing there. Then I'm going to do a narrative bridge that takes us up to Exodus 6. Then in Exodus 6, Travis is going to come out and read Exodus 6 for us. Then I'm going to explain another theme we see in the book of Exodus.

Then I'll do a narrative bridge to chapter 12. Remi is going to read chapter 12, and then I'll come out and develop that theme and do a narrative bridge to chapter 14. Steven Branch will read chapter 14, and then I'll close us.

Here are the themes I want to cover today. The first theme is the theme of *God's presence*. The second theme is the theme of *God keeping his promises*. The third theme, and the theme probably Exodus is most known for, is the theme of *liberation or deliverance from slavery*. The fourth theme we'll cover is *sacrifice*, namely that redemption comes through the sacrifice of another. Then lastly, we'll talk about the theme of *power*. These are just five of many themes, but they're the most consistent themes that show themselves in the book of Exodus.

Here's what we're going to do. The Word of God is going to be read. The very words of God are going to be read over us. Then what's going to happen is at the end, they will say when they're done, "This is the Word of the Lord." We're going to respond. This is our action. We're going to respond, "Thanks be to God." All right? We're going to try that.

Some of us are like Baptists, and we're like, "We don't do that." I'm saying you can do that. "Where is that in the Bible?" Just breathe for me, okay? They're going to say, "This is the Word of the Lord," and we're going to say, "Thanks be to God." Give it a whirl. Say, "Thanks be to God" for me. All right. Plano, Fort Worth, Southlake, Dallas, I expect to hear you up here in Flower Mound. Here comes Nikki to read Exodus 1 and 2.

**Nikki Lawrence: Exodus 1: "These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.**

**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. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.**

**Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 'When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.' But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.**

**So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and let the male children live?' The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.'**

**So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.'"**

Exodus 2: "Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.

Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.'

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Go.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, 'Because,' she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together.

And he said to the man in the wrong, 'Why do you strike your companion?' He answered, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid, and thought, 'Surely the thing is known.' When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, 'How is it that you have come home so soon today?' They said, 'An Egyptian

**delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock.'**

**He said to his daughters, 'Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.' And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, 'I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.'**

**During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew."** This is the Word of the Lord.

**Matt:** Thanks, Nikki. A couple of things you're seeing here, two themes in particular we begin to see in this text. They'll burn with different intensities in different times in our study. The first is the awareness of God, the presence of God, concerning his people.

He sees and he hears them. We read near the end of chapter 2 that he has heard their cries, and he has seen their affliction so that the presence of God is with his people even when they're in a season of their history where it seems they have been forgotten. So you have the presence of God.

What we're going to find as we read through the book of Exodus is God's power, his might, his authority, all that he is is actually moving to fulfill the promises he made to Abraham in Genesis 12, and we see it again in a few chapters later in Genesis 15. What's happening here is we see God keeps his promises.

Again, if we're still like, "Why are we in Exodus in 2016 with all we have going on?" two things. What might change in our lives if we really believed not in some sort of bumper-sticker theology, not just intellectual assent, but what if we believed in our guts that God sees us and he hears us? What sin might we walk away from? What confidence might we gain? What if we truly believed God keeps his promises?

In fact, he cannot break his promises because to break his promises would be to betray himself, and God cannot betray himself. How might we mine the Word of God for his promises? How might we

cling to them when things are dry or when things are stormy or when things are dark? This is the theme of the book of Exodus: the presence of God, and the promises of God are true.

Now right after this happens is where kind of Hollywood likes to start to kind of make movies poorly. What happens is we read Moses is keeping watch over Jethro's (his father-in-law) sheep, and he sees a bush that is burning and yet not being consumed. The Bible says he turns, and he faces it.

As soon as he turns and faces it, the Lord begins to speak to him. The Lord reveals his big plan to Moses, and he says, "I have seen the affliction of my people. I have heard their cry. You go meet with them and meet with Pharaoh and tell them I'm setting them free." Now Moses doesn't like the plan, but you have to be careful.

This is a bush that's on fire but not being consumed. You don't get too mouthy when you're in those spaces. Moses starts off with a safe question. "They're going to ask me who sent me. What am I supposed to say?" Now if you ever doubt God's mercy and grace toward you... You're a person who has struggled. You've given yourself over to some things. You're just like, "I mean, I like what you guys are saying. I just can't believe he would ever forgive me or love me."

Consider the fact (especially if you've read Genesis) that God identifies himself like this: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." If you have read your Bible, those three men were clowns. I mean, you're talking about some pretty despicable human beings. God says, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You tell them that's who sent you. In fact, tell them this. I am who I Am. You tell them I Am sent you."

Now what's happening in that statement is significant. God has just revealed his name Yahweh. He has just revealed his name, not just to his people but to the nations. Exodus is primarily a missionary handbook. It's not just him revealing himself to his people but now showing the nations, "I am the Sovereign God of all. Everyone else who is worshiped is a false god, has no power. I am he. I Am has sent you."

Now Moses (burning bush, audible voice of God, tied back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) now is like, "Well, I'm going to have to get a little bit more aggressive here. I still don't want to do this." He just says, "They're not going to believe me. I get it. This is all scary, but I just don't think they're going to

believe me." He says, "Throw your staff on the ground, Moses." So Moses drops his staff, and the staff turns into a snake, and Moses runs away.

This is conjecture. I'm going to lean over here. I think Moses might have been a terrible shepherd. Here's where I'm getting this. His job as a shepherd is to defend and protect the sheep. His staff turned into a snake, and he ran. I'm just saying, maybe the Lord was just calling... "You're just not good here. I have some plans this way."

Finally when God coaxes Moses back to his staff, he tells Moses to pick it up by the tail. When he touches the tail of a snake, it turns it back into a staff, which I think I'd be convinced at that point. Maybe I'm giving myself too much credit. Then God said, "Okay, now put your hand in your cloak." Moses put his hand in his cloak, and when he pulled it back out, the Bible says it was ashen white with leprosy. His hand was deformed, and now he has this incurable disease.

Then you have to wonder if Moses isn't thinking, "Oh my gosh! I should've listened. Now this is how my life is going to end." God goes, "No, no. Now put it back." He puts it back in, and then when he pulls it out again, his hand is normal again. He said, "Show this to the elders of Israel as well as Pharaoh."

Then from there Moses is still not letting this go. Then he says, "Well, I'm not eloquent." If we could modernize that verse, "I don't speak too good. I don't speak good and stuff." I love God's response to that, "I'm not a good communicator." God said, "Hey, who made the mouth? Moses, who made the mouth?" Then the Bible tells us God gets angry with Moses. Again, even in God's anger toward Moses...

This one is the first of many times God gets angry at Moses, so let that encourage you that God's compassion and his mercy and grace remain. He doesn't end this dialogue going, "Do you know what? Forget it. I'll get someone else." He doesn't do that. He says, "Do you know what? Your brother Aaron is of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of the priests. He is eloquent. I know he is eloquent. Your brother is going to meet you out in the wilderness, and he'll be your prophet, and you will be like God."

They go, and they meet with the elders of Israel, and they show them the signs. They say, "I Am has sent me. The God of Abraham has heard your cry." The Bible tells us the elders of Israel worshiped that their God had heard them. Then they go to Pharaoh, and they tell Pharaoh, "Hey, you have to let

them go. You have to let us go. I've come to deliver them." Pharaoh is like, "Who is this God that I should be concerned?"

Moses is ready for that. I mean, he is like, "I want him to say something," because he has that staff trick, and he has the leprosy deal. So he wants Pharaoh to act cocky. Pharaoh is Pharaoh. He does it, like, "Who is this God that I should worry about that?" *Boom!* "How about that, Pharaoh? Ha!" Then here's what Pharaoh does. Pharaoh calls some of his magicians out, and they do the same signs.

I mean, that's awkward. That's just an awkward moment, when you think you have all the bullets in the gun and just realize you really don't. What happens when no one is paying attention is Moses' snake staff eats the other snake, and no one actually sees that happen. Then from there, Pharaoh gets so agitated at Moses and Aaron and the people of Israel that he grows in cruelty and grows in violence toward Israel. What happens then is the people of Israel turn on Moses and Aaron and say, "God will judge you for this." That leads us up to chapter 6. Travis is going to tell us about chapter 6.

**Travis Cunningham:** Okay, church. We're going to read Exodus 6:1-13. **"But the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.' God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.**

**I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.**

**I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD."** Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

**So the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.' But Moses said to the LORD, 'Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?' But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt."** This is the Word of the Lord.

**Matt:** So the first theme is one of God's presence, his awareness of his people, his hearing and knowing what's going on in their lives, and then the second theme is he is a God who keeps his promises. Really, this third theme is the theme the book of Exodus is most well known for, and that's the theme of liberation or deliverance from slavery. I think that theme is important because I think there's a massive misconception in our day and age about what God is really up to in the lives of his people.

By the grace of God, I get to spend quite a bit of time with people who are either not believers in Christ or (and I still don't know how to categorize this) those who are good, moral people who go to church but aren't necessarily surrendered fully to Christ, that a life fully surrendered to Christ isn't liberation, isn't freedom, isn't life most abundant but rather repressed or locked in, that somehow the commands of God and the will of God actually oppresses us rather than sets us free.

Yet the theme the book of Exodus is most known for is the theme of liberation or deliverance from slavery. In fact, if you're a student of modern history, Exodus leaves its marks on some of kind of the biggest movements in modernity. If you know anything about the Pilgrim Fathers or the English revolutionaries of the seventeenth century, throughout their writings are quotes from this book, pointing back to this book, gaining confidence from this book, the anti-slavery campaigns of the nineteenth century.

If you're thinking William Wilberforce, they loved the book of Exodus, pointed to the book of Exodus, let it fuel their zeal for justice. The Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth century fueled by the book of Exodus. In fact, for millennia now, the refrain of, "Let my people go" has been on the lips of Christians who are serious about injustice and about God delivering the oppressed.

Now what might happen in your life in 2016 if you really understood and believed that full surrender to Jesus Christ made you free? What would happen in your marriage? What would happen at work? What would happen in your finances? What would happen in your life now, here, if you really believed that what God was after is your freedom?

From here Moses and Aaron go back to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh balks at them again. You get, I think, some of the more significant chapters of the book of Exodus when you get into the plagues. The plagues are really interesting. I can't wait to preach them. I'll preach them in two separate weekends.

One of the things that's happening in the plagues is each one of the plagues, each one of the miraculous events of God's power over the Egyptians, has a corresponding Egyptian god. What God is doing in the plagues is revealing that the gods the Egyptians worshiped are no real gods at all. Remember that statement, "I am who I Am"? He is about to flex and show Egypt that the great I Am is the only real God.

The first plague was that all the water in Egypt turned to blood. The Nile River turned into blood. Any water in pots turned to blood. All the wells just brought in blood. The Egyptians worshiped multiple gods tied to the Nile. They had a god of fertility, a god of the crops. The god of the Nile was the one that made their economy flow. God just shot the god of the Nile in the head in front of everyone and turned all their water to blood.

Then from there there were frogs everywhere. The second plague was frogs. In fact, the Bible says there was no place to sit or lie down where there weren't frogs. Right now there are some sixth-grade boys in here like, "That's awesome!" The rest of us are like, "Ugh. That would be gross!" I can only imagine the smell.

The third plague was gnats. Now there will be some people who watch this later on who aren't from Texas, and they're like, "Gnats?" They'll have to Google that and see what that is. They think we're making something up, like snipe hunting or something. Yet ultimately we're in Texas, so we know what gnats are. Gnats blacked out the sky. Can you imagine trying to breathe? Can you imagine what that would do to everything from meals to trying to just rest?

Then after the gnats, the flies moved in. Then after that, the livestock began to die. Again, each one of these things has a corresponding god. Ashtoreth, which we'll talk about this later... They worshiped a god that sustained their cattle to sustain their economy. Here they are, the Egyptians worshipping this god. The great I Am shows up and goes, "Pray all you want. Nobody is listening" and kills all the cows.

Then from there boils are all over the skin of the Egyptians. Then from there hail decimates whatever crops survived the bloodletting. If there was anything left after that, the locusts swarmed and ate all of that. Then the Bible says God blots out the sun, and darkness overwhelmed Egypt to the point where a man could not see his hand in front of his face, and you could *feel* the darkness.

Then, finally, for the second time in the book of Exodus, the tenth plague is threatened. It's important to note that before what we're about to hear Remi read about, God had warned Pharaoh twice that this was coming and then began to show Pharaoh the strength of his power so Pharaoh might relent. Yet in the hardness of his heart, he did not. This is Remi with Exodus, chapter 12.

**Remi Onayemi: Exodus 12:21-51: "Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin.**

**None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. 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 will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever.**

**And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, "What do you mean by this service?" you shall say, "It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses." And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.**

**At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.**

Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, 'Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!' The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, 'We shall all be dead.'

So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations.

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.' All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts." This is the Word of the Lord.

**Matt:** Thanks, Remi. The next theme we see, and honestly the most important theme, is the theme of sacrifice, but not just any kind of sacrifice but rather redemption through the sacrifice of another. See, it would be a mistake to assume Israel was innocent in the sight of God. In fact, the threat of death for them because of rebellion against God is as real for them as it is for the Egyptians. So God makes a way for them via the sacrifice of a spotless lamb.

This now becomes woven into the story of the people of God that we are redeemed through the sacrifice of another and that who we are as the people of God is not something we have done but rather something that has been done for us. So the people of Israel are safe not because they were awesome. In fact, we're going to hear some of the things God has to say about this people as we move through this book.

He doesn't really see them as being all that awesome. He sees himself as being awesome, and these people are evidence for that because anyone else would've already killed them. You'll even hear in the next reading how they grumble. "I miss Egypt already." What we see here is what's going to be woven into the fabric of God's people moving forward, that we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. We are saved by the blood of the Lamb.

Now from here after this you get the consecration of the firstborn (both children and livestock) to the Lord. Then you have the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Just really quickly... We'll be able to develop this more later. If you start to listen to that Feast of Unleavened Bread and you're like, "What in the world is that?" let me try to explain briefly.

When you live for 430 years in bondage in a given location, you have no distinct culture of your own. You have absorbed the culture of the country you dwell in. You don't have any distinct cultural markings that mark you as a distinct people. Well, one of the things God is beginning to do with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and on into specifically chapters 16 through the end of the book is he is giving the people of Israel a distinct culture, a way of living that the nations can look in on, see the wisdom of, and long for this God of the Bible, this great I Am.

In the New Testament when you start hearing about God fearers, those who see the people of God live in such a way that honors the great I Am, they're drawn to that. Lydia in Philippi. You have several in the New Testament who are God fearers. What that means is God creates a distinct culture among Israel that the nations would look upon and know the wisdom of God.

Again, Exodus is a missionary handbook. It's God's coming-out party to the nations, rooted in sacrifice. Again, I have to wonder if in 2016 if you grasped and truly understood redemption through sacrifice, that God's saving grace on your life is not predicated upon what *you* have done but rather on the blood of another, I wonder what kind of freedom and joy you would actually walk in when your striving and struggle for moral embetterment melts into a rest of being loved by God in Christ.

I wonder how that ceasing of striving and guilt and shame might begin to affect your relationships in positive ways, might begin to affect your work ethic in positive ways. See, how you see and understand God matters. I also like after this chapter you begin to see really the kindness of God even as he leads the people of Israel out of slavery.

The Bible tells us he didn't take them by the land of the Philistines because if they saw the land of the Philistines, they would know war was in their future, and they were too fragile for that. Instead, he led them by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night through the wilderness.

You see even the kindness of God in their fragility. Israel could not handle the idea of a future war. So he saved them for what they could not handle by leading them through and toward the wilderness. With that said, that brings us up to Exodus, chapter 14. Steven Branch is going to read Exodus 14 for us.

**Steven Branch:** Exodus, chapter 14: **"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, "They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in." And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.'** And they did so.

**When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, 'What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?' So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.**

**And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.**

**When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, 'Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: "Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.'**

**And Moses said to the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.' The LORD said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.'**

**And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.'**

**Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.**

**Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.**

**The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.'**

**Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared.**

**And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.**

**Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses." This is the Word of the Lord.**

**Matt:** Thanks, Steven. The last theme we'll develop and then we'll close out our time together is the theme of God's power. Then all of a sudden the themes start coming together. See, what we see in the book of Exodus is that the natural law God established when he created all things, God himself is able to violate and move around and not have to obey.

You get a bush that burns but is not consumed. You get staffs that turn into snakes and then back into staffs. You have disease that comes and goes at the commands of God. You get the sun blotted out, the Nile River turned into blood, frogs, locusts, gnats, flies, life, death, and the parting of the sea all obeying the sovereign decrees of the great I Am.

Now if we start to put these themes together, we begin to see our story in Exodus. If you consider the presence of God that he hears us, he knows us, he knows where life is, and he has made promises concerning us and he has the power to do something about it, he is not powerless. His

hands have never been and cannot be tied. He has the power to liberate and to deliver upon his promises, pulling us out of slavery and into his presence through the sacrifice and redemption of the blood of the Lamb.

This is our story. Listen. Exodus is not some historic book to just be read for kicks but rather it's our story. See, Jesus sets us free from slavery to sin. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross rescues us from sin and judgment. Jesus is God among us. In Jesus' face we see God's glory. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the beginning of a new creation. Exodus is one of the keys to understanding what God is up to in you and in me in Christ Jesus.

I want to end with just two questions I want you to consider. If you're in a small group, these would be good questions to talk about as you gather this week. Again, if you're not, then Group Connect is coming. The Village Church gets a lot smaller when you get in community and begin to serve as opposed to just sitting and listening, although if you're in a space you need to sit and listen, praise God. There are two questions I want you to consider.

As we talk about these themes, as we talk about the themes of God's presence, that he hears, that he knows, that you have nothing secret going on in your life, that you haven't been abandoned, as we talk about God's promises being true and that he cannot and will not ever break his promises, as we talk about freedom and being delivered from sin and death and slavery, as we consider rightly that our redemption is via the sacrifice of another, and as we consider the power of God in this season of your life...

Well, I don't know what's going on in this season of your life, but the first question is, "What do you find yourself drawn to in these themes?" Which one of these themes are you in this season going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. I need to know about that. I need to know more about that. Man, I am wavering in my understanding, wavering in my belief that that is true about God"?

See, we need to recognize the pull going on inside of us toward, "Man, I need to believe and embrace the power of God in my life. I need to believe and embrace the liberating force of Christ in my life, because I still feel like he is taking me in directions and asking things of me that are going to rob me of joy and not lead me into life everlasting.

I have a hard time believing. I'm struggling with this idea that ultimately my redemption before God has been accomplished via another. I still feel like I have to work for it and manage it and be good

enough for it. Therefore, I feel stuck and enslaved. The freedom you're talking about, Pastor, I have not experienced." Which one of those themes are you drawn to, and what's going on in your life that's drawing you toward that theme?

Then the second question is, "If this is our story, where are you in this story?" See, if you're not a Christian, haven't given your life over to Christ, then you're very much still a slave to sin and death. You are a slave to sin. You can't *not* sin even if you *try* not to sin. I think you probably know that about yourself. What you do is this kind of gymnastics of, "Yeah, but it's not serious sin. I have a buddy who seriously sins. You need to talk to him."

Yet that doesn't negate you of your sin. Christ has come to liberate you from that, to save you and deliver you from that. Is that where you are in this story? Maybe you find yourself freed, liberated, by the blood of the Lamb, but you feel stuck. I love the honesty of the book of Exodus. The people of God are exhausting in Exodus. Good news: church folk have changed since then. I mean, do you see that?

They literally aren't even completely to freedom yet when they're like, "Kind of missing being enslaved. This isn't going like I planned. Didn't we tell you to leave us alone, Moses? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I see the pillar of fire in the sky leading us, like a divine Waze app. Yet I just really miss being abused and beaten and my wife being raped. That was better."

I mean, don't you want to say, "Are you an idiot?" Yet we are. Maybe you feel stuck like that. Maybe you're like, "Okay, I know these things are true but, man, where I am in my life right now, where I am in this situation or in this place, man, I feel stuck, Pastor. I hear you, and I know these things are true, but I don't know quite what to do here. "

The reason I think if you can answer those two questions ("Where are you in this story if this is our story?" and, "Which theme do you find yourself drawn to, and why do you think that is?") in community, then I think the shaping force of the Word of God starts to do its job and we can begin to see, "Man, I need the Lord's guidance here. I need the Lord's help here. I need community to come alongside of me here. I need God to increase my faith."

I want to pray for us. As I pray for us, men and women are going to begin to gather the elements. We're going to end our service by celebrating the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, an opportunity yet again to gather together as your sons and daughters (many of us). Others of us are still just trying to figure this out. To gather together as your people and then those who are intrigued or wondering about you. I just pray even now as we turn our attention to celebrating your broken body and shed blood, we would be able to, by faith, receive your mercy and grace.

We do ask for your power in our lives, and we do ask for greater understanding and faith. We do ask for full liberation and for confidence that you have power to keep your promise. Encourage our hearts that we might leave this place bold as lions. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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