

Pentateuch: EXODUS

INTRODUCTION

The book of Exodus continues the story begun in Genesis, showing how God faithfully advanced His covenant promises of land, seed, and blessing through Abraham's family. Moses, believed to be the author, recounted how the descendants of Abraham grew into a nation, faced oppression in Egypt, and were miraculously delivered by God. Exodus is a story of redemption, covenant, and God's glory displayed through His interaction with His chosen people.

As the book opens, we learn that the Israelites, once favored because of Joseph, had been enslaved by a new Pharaoh who knew nothing of Joseph's legacy. Though enslaved, God's promise to multiply Abraham's descendants was evident as the people grew into a mighty nation. But slavery was far from the blessing God had in store. God responded to their cries by raising up Moses, (*a murderer by the way*) whom He called through the extraordinary moment of the burning bush (Exodus 3). There, God revealed His name as I AM, affirming His eternal presence and faithfulness. Through Moses, God performed mighty acts of judgment against Egypt, leading His people out of bondage with unparalleled displays of power and glory (*aka the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea*).

A pivotal moment in Exodus came at Mount Sinai, where God established the Old Covenant with Israel. He gave them the Ten Commandments and the promise, "If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). This covenant defined Israel's unique relationship with God, with the law serving to reveal God's holiness, the people's sinfulness, and their need for a Savior.

The Old Covenant was the agreement God made with the nation of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai, marking them as His chosen people. It included the Mosaic Law, which outlined moral, civil, and ceremonial commands for the Israelites to follow. Through this covenant, God revealed His holiness and called His people to live distinctly, reflecting His character to the nations. Central to the covenant were the Ten Commandments and the sacrificial system, which temporarily covered sin and pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

While obedience brought blessings and disobedience brought consequences, the Old Covenant ultimately showed humanity's inability to meet God's standard on their own, highlighting our need for a Savior. Fast forward to the New Testament, and praise God that the Old Covenant was fulfilled in Jesus, who established the New Covenant, offering grace, forgiveness, and eternal life to all who trust in Him!

Additionally, God instructed the Israelites to build the tabernacle, a portable dwelling place for His presence (Exodus 25-31). The tabernacle was where God met with His people and symbolized His desire to dwell among them. It pointed forward to Jesus, who would ultimately "tabernacle" among us and make a way for us to be in God's presence.

IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

In dating relationships, there comes a time when you need to share what you're feeling. Maybe share that you are crazy about someone, share that you wish you were with them, or maybe even share that your time with them is over. The words that we say, how we say them, and where we say them are powerful.

In the book of Exodus, we see God's use of words. The words that he says are powerful and purposeful in defining the relationship that he wants to have with his people. They are his treasured possession (19:5), he will dwell with them (29:45), he has heard their cry (1:24), and God saw them (1:25). Let the book of Exodus be a reminder that God wants to speak to his people.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

EXODUS: Escape
Redemption (Chapters 1-19)
Revelation (Chapters 20-40)

JESUS IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS

In each book of the Bible, one of the ways to read considering Jesus is to look for a “type” of Christ. “When we say that someone is a type of Christ, we are saying that a person in the Old Testament behaves in a way that corresponds to Jesus’ character or actions in the New Testament.¹” This would be a person event or moment that seems similar to Jesus, but Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection would be the greater version of it.

In the book of Exodus, Jesus is the greater Moses. Moses was used by God to rescue the people of Israel in amazing, clearly demonstrating obedience to God, and he leads the people into physical freedom from Egypt. However, Jesus is the better Moses, while Moses led God’s people to physical freedom, Jesus leads us to spiritual freedom. Freedom from the threat and punishment of sin, death, hell, and the grave! Jesus is the best deliverer for us! He leads us into the promised land of life with him forever. Hallelujah!

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN STUDYING THE BOOK OF EXODUS

OBSERVATION

- Identify the author or speaker—is it God, Moses, Moses on behalf of God, or someone else?

INTERPRETATION

- Literary context: Pay attention. Exodus uses narrative storytelling to recount God’s miraculous acts and legal literature to establish His covenant relationship with Israel. The narrative sections highlight God’s sovereignty, faithfulness, and power through events like the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the provision in the wilderness. The legal sections, including the Ten Commandments and instructions for building the Tabernacle, emphasize God’s holiness and His desire for an orderly, covenantal relationship with His people. As you seek to understand, ask what type of literature you’re reading.
 - Literary devices such as repetition, symbolism (e.g., the lamb in the Passover), and covenant language serve to teach God’s character, His expectations, and His redemptive plan. Be on the lookout for these.
- Narrative context: The original audience was the Israelites who were freed from slavery in Egypt and their descendants. Exodus fits as a continuation of Genesis, showing the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham of a growing nation, while also foreshadowing the ultimate deliverance found in Christ.
- Historical context: The events of Exodus took place during the 15th or 13th century BC (depending on dating methods), during a time when Egypt was a dominant world power. The Israelites had been living in Egypt for centuries, initially as welcome guests during Joseph’s time, but eventually enslaved under a Pharaoh who feared their growing numbers. The exodus itself is set against the backdrop of Egyptian polytheism, oppressive rule, and the grandeur of Egyptian civilization, which magnifies God’s power in delivering His people from such a mighty empire.
 - How might the historical context impact or deepen your understanding of the text?
- Cultural context: Egyptian culture was deeply polytheistic, worshipping a pantheon of gods who were believed to control natural forces and aspects of life. The plagues systematically demonstrated God’s superiority over these deities. Slavery was a common practice, and the Israelites, as a subjugated people, were forced into harsh labor. The concept of covenant was also significant in ancient Near Eastern cultures, making God’s covenant with Israel (marked by law-giving at Sinai) a familiar but unique expression of divine relationship.
 - Ask, what might make this unique? How might’ve God’s relation to his people differed from cultural practices?

APPLICATION

- Read in light of Christ.
- Resist the urge to rush to the application, “doing something,” or moving on from each day’s reading. Before you move on, spend some time sitting in silence with the Lord. Enjoy his company.
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a sin to repent from?
- Is there a promise to cling to?

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/typology-Biblical.html>

- Is there an example to follow? Or one to avoid?
- Do you see God's sovereignty in this passage?
- Are you curious about God the way Moses was? Why or why not?

PRAYER

- Pray to have a ear to hear and a curiosity about the things of God (3:2-6)
- Pray to have a heart of obedience no matter your insecurity (3:11-14)
- Pray to obey God no matter the ask. (12:33-42)
- Pray for a heart of undivided devotion to the Lord, not the things of this world (32:1-35)

CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT HAS CHURCH HISTORY SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF EXODUS

"The departure of the children of Israel from Egypt signifies the liberation of the soul from the bondage of sin."
 – Origen of Alexandria², 240 AD

"Moses' vision of God began with light; afterwards God spoke to him in a cloud. But when Moses rose higher and became more perfect, he saw God in the darkness." – Gregory of Nyssa³, 379 AD

"The blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorposts prefigured the blood of Christ, by which we are redeemed from sin." – Augustine of Hippo⁴, 400 AD

"The law says, 'Do this,' and it is never done. Grace says, 'Believe in this,' and everything is already done." – Martin Luther⁵, 1520

"The Law was given to the redeemed people, not as a means to attain salvation, but as a rule of life to show the way of gratitude and obedience." – John Calvin⁶, 1563



² Origen, *Homilies on Exodus*, in *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, Fathers of the Church, Vol. 71 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), Homily 1, p. 244.

³ https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/10341630-moses-vision-of-god-began-with-light-afterwards-god-spoke?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁴ Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, Book 12, Chapter 3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 4*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Richard Stothert (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), p. 198.

⁵ <https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/15-martin-luther-quotes-still-ring-true/>

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles William Bingham (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852), Volume 3, p. 209.