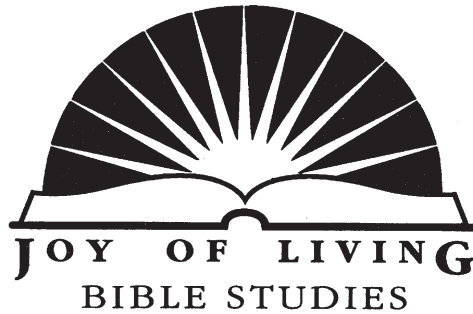


Exodus

Lesson 2



Exodus 1:1-7 God's Plan for Israel

The Israelites were in the midst of dark, fearful days and great oppression as the book of Exodus opens. As we study we will soon discover, however, that God had not forsaken them. He had gone before them and made a way for His people—even as He does so many times for us today (see Psalm 32:6-8).

The first verses of Exodus remind us, "Joseph was already in Egypt" (Exodus 1:5). Remember, his brothers had sold him as a slave when he was a young boy. But what appeared to be a tragedy turned out to be part of God's plan. Joseph himself said to his brothers after he had been reunited with them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:19-20).

God blessed Joseph, and he held a position of power second only to Pharaoh. It was Joseph who laid the plans to store food and seed during seven years when crops were good. So much grain was gathered under his direction that it was "like the sand of the sea...beyond measure" (Genesis 41:49). What an abundance of food! Then the famine came.

Through God's gracious leading Joseph's father and brothers bought grain during the famine and finally settled in Egypt at Pharaoh's invitation. And Joseph continued selling grain to all in need. The famine remained so long and was so severe that when "the people of Egypt and Canaan" (Genesis 47:15) had no more money, they exchanged their cattle and finally their land and their freedom for food.

But all was not lost, for God's plan was still in effect. Joseph, still in his high position under Pharaoh, divided the land among the people and gave them seed to plant with the instructions that they must return a fifth of their crops to Pharaoh at harvest time. Four-fifths of the crops could be used for their own food and for seed. The people were so grateful to Joseph they willingly followed his plan, declaring that he had saved their lives (see Genesis 47:24-26). In the same way, we should look to our Savior, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Master, offering our loving, grateful service, knowing that His way is the way of life (see Romans 8:6). Are you willing to seek God's plan for your life and then follow that plan? (see Psalm 31:1-3).

The Bible tells us that Joseph died in Egypt at the age of 110 (see Genesis 50:26). Scripture is silent concerning the children of Israel

for a period of almost four hundred years after the death of Joseph, except to tell us that they increased from seventy people to a nation that filled the land of Goshen (see Exodus 1:5-7).

Exodus 1:8-14 Pharaoh's Fear

Exodus 1:8 says a new king came into power in Egypt who "did not know about Joseph." The events of Joseph's faithful service and leadership had long since been forgotten. The new king felt the Hebrew nation was a threat. From his point of view he saw the Israelites multiplying, joining the enemy in time of war, and leaving Egypt. The king feared that he would lose his slave laborers—unaware that hundreds of years prior to his reign, God had planned the deliverance of His people (see Genesis 46:4). Pharaoh imagined that he could prevent the increase of Israel, of whom God had promised Abraham that they would be "as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore" (Genesis 22:17). Consequently, Scriptures records, "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread" (Exodus 1:12). Pharaoh did not know that it was futile to oppose the purpose and plan of God! The king thought he was dealing wisely with the Hebrews, but "the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight" (1 Corinthians 3:19).

In the history of the Christian church, this principle of worldly wisdom has been illustrated many times. Christians who are persecuted often seem to draw others to the Lord. Tertullian, one of the early church leaders, rightly said that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

In many countries today Christians are being persecuted, even giving their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus. Though the locations and the philosophies of the persecutors may change over time, persecution of those who follow Jesus Christ will always be a reality in our world. For example, two house church leaders were sentenced to one year of "re-education through labor" in Shandong, China. According to the Chinese government, holding a church service equates to "using an evil cult to obstruct the law" and requires 12 months of hard labor.¹

In India, two evangelists were beaten up badly on a Sunday morning. Ten members of a Hindu radical group forced their way into a private home in Bangalore city, where the pastors led regular Sunday worship. The men dragged the pastors out and brutally assaulted them, then dragged them to the police station. The police filed a case

1. <http://www.persecution.org>, July 9, 2007.

and presented the pastors in front of the magistrate and the magistrate sent them to the central jail. The innocent pastors were booked under:

Section 153-A – “Punishment for knowingly carrying arms” (The pastors were in possession of a Bible.)

Section 295-a – “Deliberate and malicious act, intended to outrage religious feelings” (They were peacefully praying in a private home.)¹

But the testimony of those who are oppressed is that the fires of persecution make their faith stronger and separate them from the world, as they rely only upon God for their help and strength. Not only have these Christians been strengthened under persecution, but the testimony of their faith has also brought many others to a saving faith in Christ. This has been true of the house churches in China, which have increased in numbers and grown spiritually during many years of intense persecution and suffering. As the apostle Paul, who personally experienced severe persecution, wrote, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31; see also 2 Corinthians 12:10).

Perhaps today you are experiencing persecution because of your love for the Lord Jesus. You may feel the loss of friends, or even family. Perhaps your job is in jeopardy due to your Christian testimony. Don't be discouraged. Be assured that God loves you, and He knows the entire path before you. He is all-wise and all-powerful, and He will deliver you through every situation that you face. Trust Him. He says to every believer, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). May it be true of you that the more you are afflicted, the more you will be transformed into His likeness (see Romans 8:28-39).

Exodus 1:15-22 Pharaoh's Plan

For as long as Joseph was alive, and for some time after his death, the Egyptians treated the Hebrews with respect and favor. But this was no longer the case. By this time, the Israelites had lived in Egypt for centuries (see Exodus 12:40). They had become slaves, oppressed by their Egyptian masters to the point of despair. The seventh chapter of Acts summarizes the history of their bondage and oppression in Egypt, covering a period of four hundred years.

The extraordinary growth of the Hebrew nation, in spite of all Pharaoh had done to oppress them, continued to annoy him. He was not only afraid the Israelites, but he hated them because of the evidence of God's blessing in their increased numbers. The king was pitting the finite against the Infinite in his hope to break their spirits, to rob them of their health and to shorten their lives, thus diminishing their numbers.

The anger of the Egyptians over the Hebrew population explosion drove them to an evil method of suppression, the murder of Hebrew children. Pharaoh ordered the midwives to be the executioners. Shiphrah and Puah were probably the chief midwives, representatives

of or superintendents over the whole profession.² They may have been Hebrews themselves or possibly Egyptian women who served the Hebrew mothers. Midwives were committed to serve and protect the lives of mothers and babies; to expect them to betray their trust made the scheme even more barbarous.

Again we see evidence of God's plan! The midwives feared God, revered His law and dreaded His wrath more than punishment from Pharaoh—and they refused to kill the baby boys. The fear of God—reverent trust—ruling our hearts will keep us from fearing—being afraid—of man. Proverbs 29:25 says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.”

The time may come when each one of us must choose between obeying God's laws or laws laid down by men. If obedience to a law compels disobedience to God, a Christian must reject the human for the Divine. We must be careful that our attitude is not one of defiance; rather, it should be an attitude of prayer and submission to God (see Matthew 5:44; Acts 5:29; 1 Timothy 2:1-5; Titus 3:1). It is so important to study the Bible, to hide it in our hearts, and to “put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes” (Ephesians 6:11; see also James. 4:7).

The midwives did nothing to further Pharaoh's plan of extinction. They justified their disobedience to the king by explaining that before they could get to the Hebrew women, their children were born. Matthew Henry wrote, “I see no reason we have to doubt the truth of this; it is plain that the Hebrews were now under an extraordinary blessing of increase, which may well be supposed to have this effect, that the women had very quick and easy labor, and, the mothers and children being both lively, they seldom needed the help of midwives.”³ The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* gives another viewpoint on the midwives' answer to Pharaoh, “Even though these women lied to Pharaoh (which the Bible, as is often the case, does not stop to specifically condemn at this point), they are praised for their outright refusal to take infant lives. Their reverence for life reflected a reverence for God... The midwives may also have attempted to avoid answering Pharaoh's question directly, and therefore they commented on what was true without giving all the details.”⁴

When Pharaoh's plan of infant execution at birth failed, he ordered the people to drown the Hebrew boy babies by throwing them into the Nile River. Here we see Satan at work behind the scenes. God had promised Abraham, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3; see also Galatians 3:8). It was Satan's plan to destroy the descendants of Abraham—to make the coming of the promised Savior impossible. Satan's first attempt to destroy the line through which the Lord Jesus was to be born was the murder of Abel (see Genesis 4). Other attempts by Satan to subvert God's plan are found in Exodus 14; 2 Chronicles 21:4,17; 22:10-12; Esther 3:6; and Matthew 2:3-13.

2. Frank E. Gaebelin, editor. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990. Notes on Exodus 1:15.

3. Henry, Matthew. *Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible*. 1706. Notes on Exodus 1:15-22.

4. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Notes on Exodus 1:17-21.

1. <http://www.persecution.org>, July 9, 2007

Exodus 2:1-10 God Sends a Redeemer

During this time a baby boy was born into the home of Amram and Jochebed (their names are given in Exodus 6:20), both of the tribe of Levi. They were delighted with their baby, “a fine child” (Exodus 2:2). Can’t you imagine their deep concern, and their careful planning as they tried to keep him from spying eyes? They saw in their beautiful boy a special blessing from God. They hid him to preserve his life, not only out of love for their son, but also because of their faith (see Hebrews 11:23).

When the child could no longer be hidden in their home, his mother lovingly made a small basket of papyrus and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She laid him in the basket and placed the tiny ark among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. The baby’s parents had overcome their fear of the king and trusted God for the preservation of their child. Their faith is revealed in their selection of the spot to place him. Human reasoning would have carried the baby as far from the river as possible, for the river was the place of death.

It was not by chance that Pharaoh’s daughter came to the river that day, for there are no chance happenings when God is in charge! God directed the princess to that particular place to bathe—God directed every action. The princess saw the basket and sent her maid for it. When she saw the Hebrew baby, she might have been indignant that anyone would defy her father’s authority, but God moved the princess with compassion. Miriam, the baby’s sister, who had been keeping an eye on him, boldly stepped forward and offered to bring a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. What excitement there must have been in the home when Miriam called her mother! When all arrangements had been made, even to paying wages to Jochebed, she and Miriam took the precious bundle, and with thankful and joyful hearts returned to their home.

We know practically nothing more of Moses’ childhood. We can assume that his God-fearing parents made the most of their opportunity to teach him reverence and worship of God, and that he was told the history of the Jewish people, and of their coming to Egypt. We are not certain of Moses’ age when his mother took him to the princess to become her adopted son.

Moses was privileged to grow up in Pharaoh’s household with all the educational facilities the royal palace provided, plus the rich experiences of the great culture of Egypt. In Acts 7:22 we read, “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” What irony that the king who later tried to prevent the Hebrews from leaving Egypt now gave food, lodging and education to the one God had chosen to eventually lead a mass exodus from the land!

Exodus 2:11-15 Moses Awakens to Reality

Moses spent the first 40 years of his life in the royal palace (see Acts 7:23). But the continued oppression of his people was more than he could bear. One day when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses took things into his own hands. When he thought no one was watching, he killed the Egyptian. This however was not God’s will,

and it is evident that Moses was walking by sight, not by faith, as 2 Corinthians 5:7 teaches us.

The next day Moses saw two Hebrews fighting and attempted to make peace. He meant well, but his interference was not appreciated. When one of the men asked, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” (Exodus 2:14), Moses realized his actions of the previous day were known. Fear gripped his heart as he wondered what Pharaoh would do to him now.

When Pharaoh heard what Moses had done, he tried to kill him, but Moses had fled to the land of Midian. Once again God’s plan and guidance are evident, since the Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his second wife, Keturah (see Genesis 25:1-2). In Midian, Moses would become familiar with the territory through which he would later lead his people.

Moses’ first attempt to save his people failed miserably—he still had much to learn before God could use him to redeem His people. There was injustice and contention in both the taskmaster’s cruelty and the Hebrews’ quarrel—and Moses felt he wanted to do something. His heart was right—he was committed to helping his people—but at this time Moses did not understand God’s procedure. It was to take a period of growing and training to bring him to the place of leadership.

God loves each of us as much as He loved Moses. Won’t you ask Him to train you in His ways each day? God has sent His Holy Spirit to indwell every believer for this very purpose. The Lord Jesus said the Holy Spirit “will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (John 16:14).

Hebrews 11:24-26 tells us, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”

Moses refused the honor and the wealth and power of his position as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Rather, he threw in his lot with the despised and persecuted people of God. This speaks to us of the importance of identifying ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and His people. Moses chose hardship and suffering, and there was no complaint or dissatisfaction in the disgrace it brought to him. His choice was worth more to him than the wealth of the greatest and richest country on earth. The pleasures of sin, the honors and fanfare, are only for a moment. Moses’ eyes were fixed on “him who is invisible”; he was “looking ahead to his reward” (Hebrews 11:26-27). What your choice today? Are you willing to make courageous choices as a servant of the Lord Jesus?

Exodus 2:16-25 Moses in Midian

From the ease of Pharaoh’s court to a well in the desert was a great change for Moses. As he sat at the well pondering past events, people came and went, drawing water for themselves and their flocks.

Seven girls—daughters of Jethro, a priest of Midian—were among the crowd that day. They had difficulty watering their father's flock because other shepherds chased them away. Moses came to the rescue, drove off the shepherds and watered Jethro's sheep himself. Once again Moses came to the defense of someone in trouble, faithful to help even in a small matter.

Moses was well-rewarded for the help he gave—he was invited to live in the household of Jethro, and later married one of his daughters. Exodus 2:21 says, "Moses agreed to stay with the man," and he settled down to tend sheep for the next forty years, but the time was drawing near for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham (see Acts 7:6-7,17).

God used Moses' experience in Midian to further prepare him for the great service to which He would call him. In the desert Moses learned something of hardship, for a shepherd's life is rugged. His time in Egypt helped him to become a scholar, a gentleman, a statesman and a soldier. But Pharaoh's courts could not provide the solitude necessary to live a life of communion with God. Moses' experience in the wilderness of Midian prepared him to converse with God.

Perhaps you feel like you are on the "far side of the desert" (Exodus 3:1). Maybe you feel you've failed God, or that He just can't use you. Take this time to learn of Him and develop your relationship with Him. Be open to His leading, and be willing to serve Him in whatever capacity He chooses.

Approximately forty years had passed since Moses left Egypt. Apparently the murdering of children had stopped. The Egyptians had found that the Israelites, though numerous, were really an asset—they were slaves under the most cruel conditions. Each king in turn continued the inhuman treatment. How sad to be so blinded to people's needs and so indifferent to their sufferings.

Do you hear the anguished cries of your neighbor or someone in your community, or perhaps of some member of your family? Do you see needs all around you? Once a small boy remarked to his friend that he would hate to wear glasses. The other replied that he wouldn't mind wearing them if they were like the ones his grandma wears. He continued, "She always sees when folks are tired and sad and when someone is in need. She always sees things at the right time." Do you—as a Christian—enjoy sharpened spiritual vision, perceiving the heartache, the burdens and battles of those about you? Ask the Lord for eyes to see and ears to hear, then ask what He would have you do to help (see Isaiah 58:6-12).

Pharaoh's ears were dull, but God heard the cries and appeals of these poor, helpless, downtrodden slaves. Remember, many of these who were God's special people had turned from Him to the idols of Egypt (see Joshua 24:14,23). They had forgotten Him, so they had no source of strength and comfort. They were desperate. At this point we have no record of the nation returning to the worship of God, yet God heard them and remembered the covenant He had made with their father Abraham to give them the land of Canaan (see Genesis 15:7,18-21).

God is always listening for the prayers of His people. How it must grieve Him when His own do not come to Him in prayer—for fellow-

ship and the comfort only He can give. Our prayers are as incense to Him, a fragrance and delight (see Psalm 141:2). Try to set aside a regular time for prayer each day, and use a prayer notebook to record requests and answers to prayer. You will come to know the Lord Jesus in a deeper way as you experience His fellowship and see His power in answer to your prayers (see Isaiah 65:24; Psalm 91:15).

God heard, remembered and saw the miserable plight of the Israelites—and the action began! (See Psalm 102:17-20.)

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Exodus 1-2.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Exodus 1-2, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Exodus 3, concentrating on verses 1-3.

1. What were Moses’ responsibilities in Midian? (Exodus 3:1a)

2. Where did Moses take the flock to graze? (Exodus 3:1b)

3. Challenge: Read the following passages and summarize the incidents that would eventually take place on this mountain.
Deuteronomy 9:7-12

1 Kings 19:8-18

4. Describe what Moses saw while tending the flock near Mount Horeb. (Exodus 3:2)

5. Challenge: The “angel of the LORD,” who appeared on numerous occasions in the Old Testament, is distinguished from all other angels. Many theologians believe this messenger of God was the Lord Jesus Christ, whose appearing—often in visible form—foreshadowed His coming in the flesh. His appearance was always for a particular reason, or to convey a special message from God. Summarize the following passages, which speak of the angel of the LORD.
Genesis 22:11-18

Judges 2:1-4

Judges 6:11-14

6. a. What did Moses do when he saw the unusual sight? (Exodus 3:3)

- b. Personal: Moses was busy with the flock on “the far side of the desert.” But he paid attention when he saw the burning bush, and this led to a conversation with God. What are some ways God has used to get your attention? Do you pay attention to the ways God may be trying to get your attention, or are you so immersed in your daily life and responsibilities that you miss His presence?

Third Day: Review Exodus 3, concentrating on verses 4-6.

1. When did God call to Moses, and what was Moses reply? (Exodus 3:4)

2. Personal: Just as God called Moses by name, He also calls to you individually. Read the parable that Jesus told in Matthew 18:12-14. God seeks out every one of His sheep that wanders off, just as He sought out Moses. The very first call God makes to us is the call to repentance, His invitation to come to Him for forgiveness from sin. Read John 3:16 and Acts 3:19. How have you responded to this personal call from the Lord?

3. What did God warn Moses in Exodus 3:5?

4. How did God identify Himself in Exodus 3:6?

5. Challenge: In the following passages, how did other people react to being in God's holy presence?
Isaiah 6:1-5

Matthew 17:1-6

6. Personal: Read Matthew 17:7. How did Jesus respond to the disciples' fear in the presence of the holiness of God the Father? Our holy God has chosen to reveal Himself to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is through what Jesus did on the cross that we can enter into the presence of the Lord. What does this mean to you, as you think about your relationship to God?

Fourth Day: Review Exodus 3, concentrating on verses 7-12.

1. What did the Lord tell Moses that He was concerned about? (Exodus 3:7,9)
2. What did God plan to do about this situation? Who does He say will accomplish this? (Exodus 3:8)
3. After declaring His plan and committing Himself to accomplish it, what does God tell Moses his part will be? (Exodus 3:10)
4. a. What was Moses' response? (Exodus 3:11)
 - b. Challenge: What do you learn from the following passages about some of the other people that God has called to serve Him?
Saul, Israel's first king—1 Samuel 9:17-21

the prophet Jeremiah—Jeremiah 1:4-6

the apostle Paul—1 Corinthians 15:9

5. a. God gave a promise with His commission to Moses. What does Exodus 3:12 say?
 - b. Challenge: Read Matthew 28:18-20. What did Jesus command His followers, and what did He promise?
6. Personal: None of the people in question 4 felt adequate or deserving when God called them. There is no limit to the way God can use you when you depend upon His power. List some specific areas where God is asking you to serve Him. How do His promises in Exodus 3:12 and Matthew 28:20 change your perspective on these areas of service?

Fifth Day: Review Exodus 3, concentrating on verses 13-15.

1. What did Moses ask God in Exodus 3:13?
2. How did God identify Himself in Exodus 3:14?

3. Challenge: This was the name by which God wished to be known and worshipped in Israel. Read John 8:58-59. When Jesus applied this phrase to Himself, how did the leaders of the Jews respond to what they saw as blasphemy—Jesus' claim to be God?
4. How else did God identify Himself in Exodus 3:15?
5. The *NIV Study Bible* explains, "The Hebrew for the name translated "LORD" [in Exodus 3:15] is "Yahweh." It means "He is" or "He will be" and is the third-person form of the verb translated "I will be" in Exodus 3:12 and "I AM" in verse 14. When God speaks of himself he says, "I AM," and when we speak of him we say, "He is."¹ Read Revelation 1:8,17. How do these verses express this same attribute of God?
6. Personal: God identifies Himself by this name—not only to Israel, but also to you. What does this name reveal to you about His character? How does this make you feel?

Sixth Day: Review Exodus 3, concentrating on verses 16-22.

1. a. Who was Moses to go to first with God's message? (Exodus 3:16a)
 - b. What was the message Moses was to give them? (Exodus 3:16b-17)
2. How did God say they would receive Moses? (Exodus 3:18a)
3. a. What request was to be made of Pharaoh, king of Egypt? (Exodus 3:18b)
 - b. Did God promise that the king would immediately grant their request? (Exodus 3:19)
4. Although God gave no assurance of immediate agreement on the king's part, what does He say that promises the final result? (Exodus 3:19-20)
5. How does God promise to grant divine favor to His people as they leave Egypt? (Exodus 3:21-22) Notice how this will reverse the humiliation and privation of their status as slaves to the Egyptians.
6. Personal: Do you feel that you are a slave to something or some situation, and that you have no hope of change or rescue? God will also "stretch out His hand" to help His children today. Read Zechariah 4:6 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. Why not pray about your situation now?

1. Kenneth Barker, editor. *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985).