

EXODUS OVERVIEW

A. Title and Theme

EXODUS is the second book in the OT, authored by Moses. This great historical event took place in around 1250 B.C. and has been widely circulated today, just as the LORD purposed it to be, *"He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."* (Joshua 4:24)

Clearly, God purposed that upon seeing the mighty acts of His deliverance, all the peoples of the earth would come to be His people, and Israel would fear Him and would be a testimony for Him in the land given. Above this, God has a greater and eternal purpose: the deliverance of Israel is a prototype of His salvation for mankind.

For this round of study, we will focus on understanding the salvation of God. The salvation of God is not just confession and eternal life. God's salvation encompasses much more than that, as our Lord Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* (John 10:10) We shall see that God's salvation is not only to bring Israel out of Egypt, but includes the provision of a land flowing with milk and honey, a covenant to assure them of His faithfulness, the Law for them to build a great nation, and the dwelling presence of God in the place of worship. To sum it up, we will learn about God deliverance, assurance of covenantal love and the acceptance of worship.

The word Exodus means exit or departure. In the Torah, it is called *Shemoth* which means 'names', deriving from the first words of Exodus *"and these are the names of ..."* (1:1) As Genesis closes with a coffin – death of a patriarch (Joseph), showing that fact that the entire humanity, including the people of God, are subjected to the power of death, Exodus continues the story with the proclamation that only Yahweh the God of Israel can liberate mankind from the bondage of sin and bring them into eternal life.

B. Theology

This book is packed with God's action and rich in theology. In the liberation of Israel God revealed His lordship and kingship over all the earth. He revealed who He is, His way of saving, and His way of worship.

1. God is the Lord of history. Neither the afflictions of Israel nor the plagues of the Egyptians were outside God's knowledge and control. God does not lose control over any event in history.

What is most reassuring of all is God's faithfulness. *"God remembers"* His covenant with Abraham which was what He promised some four hundred to six hundred years earlier (2:24,6:5) and He began to bring that promise to fulfilment by bringing Israel out of Egypt to the Land of Canaan. Will He not remember the covenant He made with us by His Son's blood?

Exodus also shows us the assurance of God's presence with His people – He appeared to Moses in the burning bushes, in the manifestation of the divine power with Moses, in the covenantal meal that the elders of Israel enjoyed on Mt Sinai as *"they saw the God of Israel"* (c 24); and last but not least in His glory that filled the tabernacle.

2. Theology of Redemption. As early as in the 2nd book of the Bible God revealed that He would deliver mankind through redemption. The word 'redeem' appears in the Passover narrative in chapter 12 and also in the sealing of the covenant in chapter 24. Even though in Genesis 3:15 God laid a lead to His salvation for mankind, it is in Exodus that the way of salvation was

elaborated. The Passover lamb was a substitute that allowed the firstborn to live (12:13) and its blood propitiated the wrath of God so that the angel of death would pass over the protected homes.

3. Theology of worship. In Exodus we see that the omnipotent, unchanging and transcendent God of the universe had, by means of the tabernacle, graciously come to "dwell" with His people, thereby revealing His immanence. The tabernacle was costly in time, effort and monetary value; yet in its significance and function it pointed to the chief end of man: to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

C. Structure

There are three major events in this book.

1. The Great Escape (Liberation) c 1-18
 - 1.1. Preparation c1-4
 - 1.2. Obstructions c 5-11
 - 1.3. Accomplishment c 12-18
2. The Mosaic Covenant (The Law) c 19-24
 - 2.1. Commandment (Moral Law) c 19-20
 - 2.2. Decrees (Civil Law) c 21-23
 - 2.3. Ordinances (Religious Law) c 24
3. The Tabernacle (Worship) c 25-40
 - 3.1. Instruction (Design) c 25-31
 - 3.2. Interruption (Sin) c 32-34
 - 3.3. Completion (Building) c 35-40

D. The Great Escape

1. The Great Leader

Exodus does not elevate Moses' greatness by emphasizing his courage. Moses did not represent a 'brave' general who was ready to rescue God's people. Instead, he pleaded and begged to be relieved of his duty, for he was deeply conscious of his inadequacy. Moses' greatness stems not from his own inner strength but rather from his recognition that without his God he could do nothing. Only Yahweh could save Israel from their enemies. Moses was merely a servant in the LORD's house (14:31)

2. The Great I AM

Yahweh appeared to Moses as the God who keeps his covenant with his people. He would fulfil his covenantal promise by rescuing Israel from Egypt and by bringing them into the land of promise. This explains the strange passage in 4:24-26 where the Lord threatened to kill Moses for not circumcising his son, presumably because of the objection of Zipporah his wife, thereby refusing to keep the covenant stipulation that Yahweh had ordained. How could Moses be the agent of covenantal deliverance of God when he himself did not apply the covenantal sign to his own son! Covenantal blessing only comes to those who obey God.

3. The Ten plagues

Why ten plagues? Clearly GOD as creator and ruler of the cosmos could have liberated Israel immediately, He could have crushed Pharaoh as easily as one steps on an ant.

As God said to Pharaoh, *"For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. 16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."* (9:15-16)

Pharaoh began the confrontation by asking "Who is the LORD?" (5:2) By the end of the plagues he knew the answer to that question. The infliction of one plague after another impressed upon both the Israelites and the Egyptians that Yahweh was Lord of all, and that the liberation of Israel was not a freakish accident. It was the outworking of Yahweh's plan. The ten plagues is a declaration to mankind at all time, even today!

4. The Passover

The victory of Exodus is to be celebrated annually in the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread (Ex 12-13). Israelite parents are to tell the story of what happened to their children so that Israel as a people would never forget that Yahweh brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand (13:9)

Yahweh could have rescued Israel simply by destroying all the firstborns in Egypt. The Passover event was also meant to remind Israel that they deserved divine judgement as the Egyptians did, and thus they required the blood of redemption. God would 'pass over' their firstborn only if blood was applied to the doorpost of the house.

E. The Mosaic Covenant

At Sinai, before the giving of the Ten Commandments Yahweh reminded Israel:

"How I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (19:4) and

"I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery" (20:2)

It is important to note that Yahweh's deliverance preceded the giving of the covenant stipulations. It was not the Israelites' moral virtue that caused God to save them from the Egyptian bondage. God delivered them because of His mercy and love, which were underserved and unmerited. The Sinai covenant is thus not to be taken as God's promise to save men by work.

F. The Tabernacle

Exodus devotes 13 chapters to the tabernacle, giving detailed instructions on its designs from 25:1-31:18, and then describing in great detail how it was built, 35:1-40:38. The tabernacle is where Yahweh 'dwells' with His people, meets with them and fundamentally fellowships with them. However, the significance of the tabernacle is more than this. It points to something greater than itself – the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

Note also that in Exodus the Sabbath command (31:12-17) closes the passage on the instructions of the tabernacle and also opens the next account of its completion (35:1-3). This tells us that the Yahweh's presence in the tabernacle was intended to ensure for Israel the enjoyment of the very great covenant blessing – the rest.

G. Closing

In Exodus God began to bring to realization a great nation for Abraham. The exodus generation witnessed that Yahweh was the almighty and covenant-keeping God, and so do we, the NT generation! Through the faith that is given us by the Holy Spirit, we witnessed the mighty power of God in Christ's incarnation, in the shedding of blood on the Calvary cross, in raising him from the dead, and in bringing thousands upon thousands of people from all nations into His covenant. God desires that we pledge allegiance to Him, to follow Jesus and stop sinning, as Romans 6:11 "*Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*" There is no rest for us outside this allegiance, just as there is no rest outside the promised land for the Israelites. (Heb 3:16-19)



Renewing of the mind:
