



## A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

### THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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#### ISRAEL'S OPPRESSION AND MOSES' EARLY LIFE (1:1-2:25)

##### The Place of the Passage

The first two chapters of Exodus set the stage for the rest of the book. As Israel expands into a great nation, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:2), Pharaoh oppresses them and seeks to curtail their growth. The birth of Moses is presented as the climactic, ironic reversal of Pharaoh's oppressive attempts, hinting that Moses will be a key means by which God will rescue his people. The notice at the end of chapter 2, that "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:24), prepares us to see God act further on His promises to the patriarchs and bring Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

##### The Big Picture

Although Pharaoh oppresses Israel, God's promises of Israel's growth and deliverance from Egypt begin to take shape.

##### Gospel Glimpses

**A MERCY-LOVING GOD.** These opening chapters of Exodus mention God in only two places: when the midwives spare the Hebrew boys (1:17-21) and when God hears the Israelites' groaning in their slavery (2:23-25). In the first case, God rewards the midwives for mercifully sparing the Israelite children; in the second case, God mercifully looks upon His people as they groan in their slavery. Although Exodus contains many laws and commands that God will require his people to obey, the book starts off with a focus on God's supremely merciful character. It is only after He has lavished mercy on His people that God gives them commands. This mercy of God is reflected elsewhere in the Old Testament, but it is most evident in the Cross of Jesus. Just as God looked at the plight of Israel in slavery to Egypt and was moved to rescue them, so He saw the plight of our slavery to sin (John 8:34) and rescued us.

**UNEARNED RELATIONSHIP.** Exodus states that the reason God rescued Israel was His faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:24; 6:5). This covenant was founded on God's grace, as Abraham did nothing to earn this special relationship with God. Furthermore, when Israel was suffering in their slavery, it is not clear that they cried out to God for help; the text simply says that they "groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help," and that this cry "came up to God" (2:23). This ambiguity further emphasizes God's initiative in coming to their rescue and in establishing a relationship with them. Although neither Abraham nor Israel deserved God's relational commitment, He nevertheless bound Himself to them and promised to bless them

(Genesis 12:2-3). Similarly, those who come to God through faith in Jesus do nothing to merit this saving relationship; God in His grace always takes the first step in bringing us to Himself.

### **Whole-Bible Connections**

**FRUITFULNESS AND MULTIPLICATION.** At creation, humanity was commissioned to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). This command was repeated to Noah (Genesis 9:1,7), and God promised the patriarchs that He would enact this multiplication for them (Genesis 17:1-6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3-4). We see this promise fulfilled initially in this passage (Exodus 1:7), but God’s law makes it clear that the continual fulfillment of this promise is contingent on the people’s obedience (Leviticus 26:3,9; Deuteronomy 7:12-13). As time passes and Israel proves unfaithful, God judges them and sends them into exile; yet hope still remains that in the future God will “bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply” (Jeremiah 23:3). The New Testament depicts this promise being fulfilled through the word of God, which is “fruitful” and “multiplies” (Acts 6:7; 12:24; Colossians 1:6), bringing salvation to sinners and resulting in the “fruitfulness” of good works and in “multiplication” of the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).

**IRONIC REDEMPTION.** This passage presents the birth of Moses — who will be the human instrument of God’s salvation of Israel — as the climax of a series of ironic reversals of oppression. This pattern of God ironically bringing redemption through oppression can be traced as far back as the promise of Genesis 3:15, where God declares that the seed of the woman will triumph over the seed of the serpent, but will do so while being oppressed (“he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”). This ironic pattern reaches its apex in the cross of Christ, in which salvation unto life is achieved through suffering unto death (II Corinthians 13:4), and it continues as the church grows despite the persecutions brought against her.

### **Theological Soundings**

**CIVIL GOVERNMENT.** In Exodus 1:15-21, the midwives disobey Pharaoh’s decree to murder the Hebrew children and are blessed by God for doing so. Although Scripture commands us to “be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1), and that “whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed” (Rom. 13:2), such subjection is not warranted when the governing authorities command believers to violate God’s standards. In Acts 5, when the council of the Sanhedrin interrogates the apostles concerning their violation of the command to stop teaching in Jesus’ name, the apostles reply, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

**COVENANT.** God is moved to act on Israel’s behalf because of the covenant He made with their ancestors (Exodus 2:24-25). In Scripture, covenants are a central means by which God interacts with humanity and brings about his redemption. After Adam broke his covenant with God by disobeying him, God made a series of covenants with Noah

(Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham (Genesis 15:7-20; 17:1-14), Israel (Exodus 19-24), David (Psalm 89:1-4; 2 Samuel 7:8-16), and Jesus (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20) to restore humanity's fractured relationship with Him. Since Jesus is the perfect mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:24), those who come to Him in faith are secure in their forgiveness.

## **Glossary of Terms**

*Exile: A forced resettlement of a population, usually due to military conquest.*

*Mediator: One who intercedes between parties to resolve a conflict or achieve a goal.*

*Redemption: The act of buying back someone who had become enslaved or something that had been lost to someone else. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus purchased redemption for all believers (Colossians 1:13-14).*

*Satan: A spiritual being whose name means "accuser." As the leader of all the demonic forces, he opposes God's rule and seeks to harm God's people and accuse them of wrongdoing. One day he will be destroyed along with all his demons (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).*

**Please complete the assignments according to their chapters:**

### **Exodus 1 and 2 Assignments**

**Be prepared to discuss the following:**

1. In Genesis 1:26-27, God created humanity in his “image”, which means that humans were designed to serve as God’s royal representatives on earth. In the ancient world, the presence of a king’s “image” (usually a statue) represented the reign and authority of that king. God then commanded humanity to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (v. 28), which shows that they were to represent God’s kingship to the ends of the earth. In light of this, what does Exodus 1:7 imply about Israel’s purpose as a nation?

2. In Exodus 1:16 and 1:22, Pharaoh specifies that each Hebrew “son” (and not simply “boy”) must be killed. Based on Exodus 4:22–23, against whom is Pharaoh setting himself up here in chapter 1? What might this imply about those who oppose the church today?

3. The name “Moses” seems to be related to the Egyptian word for “son”, but it also sounds like the Hebrew verb “to draw out” (Exodus 2:10). Given Pharaoh’s decree in 1:22, what is ironic about this double meaning of Moses’ name?

4. In Exodus 2:24–25, God is the subject of four successive verbs (“God heard . . . God remembered . . . God saw . . . and God knew”). Why do you think the text repeats “God” as the subject here? What do you think it means for God to “remember” his covenant with the patriarchs?

**Please answer the following questions:**  
**Exodus Chapter 1**

1. How many times in chapter 1 did Moses emphasize how numerous and how strong the Jews became in Egypt?
2. The sons of Jacob entered Egypt with Jacob and whom? (Exodus 1:1)
3. What happened to Joseph and his brothers? (Exodus 1:6)
4. With what was the land of Egypt filled? (Exodus 1:7)
5. What is significant about the new king's lack of knowledge about Joseph in Genesis 1:8-14 (read Gen 47:1-10 & Gen 50:1-11)?
6. What did the new king fear, according to Exodus 1:10?
7. Why were slave masters put over the Israelites and what did they build? (Exodus 1:11)
8. How did the oppression affect the Israelites? (Exodus 1:12)
9. According to Exodus 1:15-21, who were Shiphrah and Puah and what were they instructed to do?
10. Why did they not obey the king? What did they tell Pharaoh? How did God reward them?
11. How long did the Levite woman hide her son? (Exodus 2:2)
12. Describe the basket in verse three and who watch it. (Exodus 2:3,4)

13. When was the baby taken to Pharaoh's daughter? What was the baby named and why? (Exodus 2:10)

14. What two things did Moses see when he went to view his own people? (Exodus 2:11)

15. After Moses had killed the Egyptian and went back to the Hebrews and tried to stop a conflict between two of them, how did they respond to Moses? How did Stephen interpret this experience in his speech before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:35?

16. What two positions did the Hebrews question Moses about taking, and what question caused Moses to become frightened? (Exodus 2:14)

17. Why was Moses frightened by this question? (Exodus 2:14)

18. Where did Moses go to live? (Exodus 2:15)

19. How did Moses help the daughters? (Exodus 2:16-17)

20. What surprised their father in this verse? (Exodus 2:18)

21. What did the daughters call Moses? (Exodus 2:19)

22. Who was Moses' wife? (Exodus 2:21)

23. What was the name of Moses' son? What was its meaning? (Exodus 2:22)

24. How many times does the text mention God from 1:1 to 2:22?

25. How many times does the text mention God in 2:23-24?