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A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

MOSES' CALL AND PREPARATION (3:1-7:25)

The Place of the Passage

Now that the stage is set with Israel in slavery and God poised to act on His covenant promises, this section records God's call and preparation of Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt. Although God repeatedly promises to make good on His word and accompany Moses in leading Israel out of Egypt, both Moses and Israel struggle to believe in the midst of their difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, God assures His people that they will know that He is the Lord when He redeems them and judges Egypt. In the following chapters God will prove himself faithful to this promise by delivering Israel from slavery "with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment".

The Big Picture

God promises to deliver Israel from slavery in Egypt, but the Israelites struggle to believe in the midst of their oppression.

Gospel Glimpses

CHOOSING UNLIKELY LEADERS. In these chapters, Moses is presented as an unlikely leader. He isn't seeking a leadership role (3:1-3), doesn't think he is significant enough for the task (3:11), isn't a good speaker (4:10), tries to get out of the job (4:13), doesn't follow the rules well (4:24-26), and is a complainer (5:22-23). However, God often chooses to work through such people. Jacob was wily, Joseph was a slave, David was the youngest, and the apostle Paul was a persecutor of the church, yet God chose each in their time to lead his people in accomplishing his divine purposes. By choosing such unlikely leaders to carry out his work, God highlights his own grace and power in salvation.

DELIVERANCE FOR DOUBTERS. Despite God's repeated assurances of his personal presence in redeeming his people (3:12; 4:12, 15; 6:1-8), they repeatedly doubt and disbelieve (5:21-23; 6:9). Nevertheless, as the story moves forward, God's covenant love for Israel moves him to deliver this doubting people anyway.

Similarly, though we were once chronic spiritual doubters—indeed, we were “dead in our trespasses and sins,” totally faithless, as Paul says (Ephesians 2:1)—“because of the great love with which he loved us . . . [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Whole-Bible Connections

GOD'S PRESENCE. A repeated theme throughout this section is God's presence. Moses must remove his sandals because God's presence makes the ground holy (3:5). As mentioned above, God repeatedly promises his presence in delivering Israel (3:12; 4:12, 15; 6:1-8), and as discussed below, even God's name reflects his presence with his people. By the end of Exodus, God will dwell with his people through the tabernacle, as later through the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). Although God removed his presence from the temple during the Babylonian exile (Ezekiel 11:23), the divine presence returned with Jesus, who "dwelt among us" (John 1:14). After Jesus ascended, he poured out the Holy Spirit, who now makes the church God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16).

When Jesus returns and all things are made new, God's presence with humanity will be permanent: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Revelation 21:3).

GOD'S NAME. In Exodus 3:13-22, God tells Moses his name, "The Lord," which translates the Hebrew name "YHWH" and is related to the verbal phrase "I am who I am" (v. 14). As the ESV text note says, this phrase may also be translated, "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE." Insight into the significance of this name comes from observing that this same verbal phrase ("I will be") occurs just two verses prior, when God assures a doubtful Moses by saying, "I will be with you" (3:12). Therefore, contextually, God's name reflects the fact that he will be "with" his people. Centuries later, Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth of a child named "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), which means "God with us." Centuries after that, Matthew tells us that this prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:23), whose name means, significantly, "YHWH saves".

GOD'S SON. The theme of Israel as God's "son" first appears in this section (Exodus 4:22-23). God rescues Israel from slavery the way that a father protects his son. Yet as time goes on, Israel will repeatedly turn away from God and live as a disobedient son. Through the prophet Hosea, God later recalls, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11:1). However, God goes on to say, "The more they were called, the more they went away" (Hos. 11:2). Eventually this disobedient son would be disciplined through exile, and God would send another Son as a redeemer. When Joseph took Mary and Jesus down to Egypt to avoid Herod's genocide (Matthew 2:14-15), Matthew tells us that this fulfilled Hosea 11:1. That is, Jesus was replaying Israel's role as God's "son" in the exodus. However, as the perfect Son of God, Jesus obeyed where Israel had disobeyed, and because of Jesus' perfect obedience, we who believe in him now receive "adoption as sons" (Galatian 4:4-5).

Theological Soundings

TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE. Two fundamental attributes of God are his transcendence and his immanence. God's transcendence refers to his complete distinction from and sovereignty over creation. This distinguishes biblical faith from

pantheism, which views all of creation as divine. God's immanence refers to his personal presence and involvement in creation. This distinguishes biblical faith from deism, which views God as distant and uninvolved in creation. Both attributes are reflected in this section as the transcendent God sovereignly hardens Pharaoh's heart, while the immanent God draws near to his people as he prepares to deliver them from their bondage.

SOVEREIGNTY OVER UNBELIEF. Twice in this section God says that he will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not listen to Moses and release the people (Exodus 4:21; 7:3). Although mysterious to us, in his wisdom God sees fit to use and even facilitate human rebellion and unbelief for his good purposes. In this section, God states that Pharaoh's resistance will provide him the opportunity to showcase his salvation of Israel by bringing judgment upon Egypt (7:4-5). Similarly, the book of Acts reveals that God used the rebellion and unbelief of Herod, Pontius Pilate, and others to showcase the greatest act of salvation ever—the crucifixion of Jesus—all of which God sovereignly “predestined” (Acts 4:27–28).

Glossary of Terms

Theopany: An appearance of God to a human being.

Babylonian Exile: The forced resettlement of Israel out of their land and into Babylon in 586 BC.

Predestine: To sovereignly determine beforehand.

Please answer the following questions:
Exodus Chapter 3

1. Exodus 3:1-12 records the theophany of the burning bush, in which God calls Moses to lead Israel. In the broader context of Exodus as a whole, what does the “flame of fire” (3:2) indicate about future events?
2. In reference to Exodus 2:8, what was another name for Reuel? (Exodus 3:1)
3. Where did Moses lead the flock? (Exodus 3:1)
4. What was strange about the fire? (Exodus 3:2)
5. Why do you think God chose this way to appear to Moses? What was the significance of appearing in a burning bush?
6. Who called to Moses and from where? (Exodus 3:4)
7. What did God tell Moses to do and why? (Exodus 3:5)
8. Why did Moses hide his face? (Exodus 3:6)
9. What had God seen and heard? (Exodus 3:7)

10. In Exodus 3:8 God says that he will “bring [Israel] up out of that land,” but then two verses later he tells Moses, “Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (v.10). What does this reveal about how God carries out his salvation in the world?

11. How was God going to rescue his people? (Exodus 3:9-10)

12. What would happen when the Israelites came out of Egypt? (Exodus 3:12)

13. What name does God give Moses to tell who has sent him and under what name will God be remembered? (Exodus 3:14,15)

14. To whom was Moses to go? (Exodus 3:16)

15. What did God already know and what would God do to the Egyptians? (Exodus 3:19, 20)

Exodus Chapter 4

1. In Exodus 4:1-9, God gives Moses several signs to validate his leadership. How does Moses respond in verse 10? How does God respond to Moses in verses 11-12? From this, what do we learn about the relationship between gifts and faith in serving God?

2. According to verse 1, what did Moses have in his hand and what was Moses to do with it? What happened afterwards? (Exodus 4:1-5)

3. Where was Moses to put his hand? What happened? How was it restored? (Exodus 4:6,7)
4. What did God ask Moses in verse 11?
5. What did Moses' ask and how did God react? (Exodus 4:13-14)
6. Who does God tell Moses will help him? (Exodus 4:14)
7. How did Jethro react to Moses' request to return to Egypt? (Exodus 4:18)
8. What had the Lord told Moses about returning to Egypt? (Exodus 4:19)
9. Who did Moses take with him? (Exodus 4:20)
10. Before Moses has his first encounter with Pharaoh, God says that he will "harden [Pharaoh's] heart, so that he will not let the people go" (4:21). Why do you think God would do this? How might this push back against common preconceptions concerning how God interacts with people?
11. According to verse 22, Israel was what to God?
12. In Exodus 4:24-26, why is God about to kill Moses (Genesis 17:12-14)? What does this teach us about those whom God calls to lead?

13. What did Zipporah do and how does she describe Moses? (Exodus 4:25,26)

14. According to verse 47, where did Aaron meet Moses?

15. Who went before the elders and why did they bow down and worship? (Exodus 4:29-31)

Exodus Chapter 5

1. In chapter 5, Moses and Aaron faithfully obey God's word and ask Pharaoh to release the people (vv. 1-3). This results in Pharaoh further oppressing the people (vv. 4-19) and the people condemning Moses and Aaron (vv. 20-21). What does this show us about the potential results of "faithful obedience" to God in a sinful world?

2. Why did they say the trip to the desert to worship was necessary? (Exodus 5:3)

3. What did Pharaoh say Moses and Aaron were doing? (Exodus 5:4)

4. What message did Pharaoh send to the slave drivers and foremen? (Exodus 5:6-7)

5. Although the people had to gather their own straw what was expected of them? What does this treatment remind you of? (Exodus 5:8)

6. What did Pharaoh say the Israelites were? (Exodus 5:8)

7. If the work was harder, what would the men do? (Exodus 5:9)

8. Where did the Israelites get stubble? What was its use? (Exodus 5:12)
9. Who was beaten because they had not met their quotas? (Exodus 5:14)
10. Who did the foremen appeal to? Who did they blame? (Exodus 5:15-16)
11. What did the foremen tell Moses and Aaron? (Exodus 5:20-21)
12. Whom did Moses turn to in verse twenty-two? (Exodus 5:22)
13. After Moses complains to God about Israel's worsening circumstances (5:22-23), God initially responds not by alleviating their difficulty but by recalling his covenant and reiterating his promises (6:1-8). What do you think God was teaching Israel by doing this?
14. How might this apply to us when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances?
15. What does Moses say Pharaoh has brought upon the Israelites because of him? (Exodus 5:23)

Exodus Chapter 6

1. What would happen because of God's mighty hand? (Exodus 6:1)
2. How was God not known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (Exodus 6:3)
3. How had Abraham and his descendants lived in Canaan? (Exodus 6:4)

4. What six things does God say he is going to do for Israel? Why didn't they listen to Moses? (Exodus 6:6-9)

5. Despite God's reassurances after Moses complains, Israel still does not believe (6:9). Nevertheless, the text repeatedly emphasizes that God continues to command Moses and Aaron to proceed in carrying out his redemption of the people (6:10-13; 26-28; 7:1-2). What does this show us about God's prerequisites for those whom he chooses to save?

6. How did Moses speak? (Exodus 6:12)

7. Who gave Moses and Aaron the charge to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt? (Exodus 6:13)

8. Who is the first born of Israel? (Exodus 6:14)

9. How many sons did the following have: Reuben, Simeon, Levi? Who were they? (Exodus 6:14-16)

10. Who were the sons of the following: Gershon, Kohath, Merari? (Exodus 6:17-19)

11. Who did Amram take as a wife? How many sons did he have? Who were they? (Exodus 6:20)

12. According to verse 23, who was Aaron's wife? (Exodus 6:23)

13. How many sons did they have? Who were they? (Exodus 6:23)

14. Who said, "I am of uncircumcised lips and how shall Pharaoh hearken into me?" (Exodus 6:30)

15. What was his concern? (Exodus 6:30)

Exodus Chapter 7

1. How had God made Moses and Aaron, according to this verse? What does this mean in the text? (Exodus 7:1)
2. According to verse 4, who would God bring out of Egypt?
3. How old were Moses and Aaron? (Exodus 7:7)
4. What happened when Aaron threw his staff before Pharaoh? Who was able to duplicate this? (Exodus 7:10,11)
5. What happened to the Egyptians staffs? (Exodus 7:12)
6. Where was Moses to meet Pharaoh? When? (Exodus 7:15)
7. What was Moses going to do to the waters of the Nile? (Exodus 7:17)
8. What would happen when the water became blood? Where was the water supply? (Exodus 7:18,19)
9. How were the Egyptian magicians able to do this? (Exodus 7:22)
10. Where did the Egyptians get drinking water? (Exodus 7:24)