

Sources: Alec Moyter, *"The Message of Exodus,"* TGC Jay Sklar, *"Invitation to Exodus"* and ESV Intro to Exodus

You know, I don't believe I've ever felt so compelled to share an Introduction with you all. And never have I felt so intimidated. Last year in the Gospel of John we experienced the joy of connecting with Jesus. It was personal, warm. It was a story told by a man "beloved," intimate with our Lord, someone who touched, walked, talked, and ate with him. And we were all deeply blessed. John's story began huge and quickly moved up close; from the vast, "in the beginning was the Word," to the personal. Remember Jesus speaking of "living water" with a ostracized woman at the well. Remember "the sheep know my voice and follow me." Think of the risen Christ outside his tomb, speaking one word, "Mary." Intimate, close. Darkness trembled, the world turned and changed at his words. John's Gospel introduced us to a world of forgiveness and life. We were all amazed and felt our Savior walking with us on the journey. Maybe you felt as I did, sad to let go of John.

In contrast, Exodus feels enormous like a vast mountain range; somehow foreign and so ancient. Until...after sitting with it for awhile, I began to see the lines connecting, weaving back and forth between the story of Jesus in John and the story of God's rescue of a people in Exodus. So please, don't let go of John's Gospel. Bring it with you (lift up my copy of John). Look for the cords and patterns that bind the two accounts together. God at work in both. Jesus himself was steeped in this piece of history we are about to study. Truly his Spirit inspired it. As the Word made flesh, he lived this story, fulfilled it, made it vibrant, alive, and complete. Jesus is still living out the Exodus story in each one of us who believe in him as we walk by faith out of slavery, through the wilderness of this world and into the Promised Land.

The book of Exodus is a grand epic that recounts historic events. It is the second of a five volume series. We call those five volumes, the Pentateuch, which is Greek for Five Books. Taken together, the Five Books of Moses or the Torah create a cohesive storyline that establishes the foundation of God's plan and purpose for creation and humankind. Moses is a towering figure in Exodus and in Biblical literature. He is the main author and key human figure of these five volumes. It is Moses, an unlikely insecure fellow, whom the LORD chooses as Israel's deliverer and prophet to pass God's words to the people.

The title, Exodus, is taken from the Greek exodos meaning "a way out" or "departure," referring to the Hebrews' dramatic rescue out of Egypt. When did this take place? Conservative scholars place the event sometime in the fifteenth century before Christ. Over thirty-five hundred years ago.

Exodus picks up where Genesis ends. So to better understand the arch of the biblical narrative that leads into Exodus, we need to examine Genesis just a bit. From the beginning, God had a vision and a plan for an amazing place to live with his newly created children. The earth was to be a dwelling place, shalom, a place of abundance and flourishing. His human children were intended to multiply, subdue and manage

this amazing earth. What a great job! Genesis chapters 1-11 describe that world as packed with life. The Creator said, "It is good". And it was very good - for about three pages. Then what happens? Right - disaster strikes. Humans reject God's divine plan and choose to follow their own. Death enters the picture. Genesis reveals the desperate plight of the human race and its need for salvation. But Yahweh does not give up on his plan. Instead he launches a rescue in chapters 12-30.

These chapters of Genesis focus on the family of Abraham and three generations of descendants: Isaac, Jacob and the sons of Jacob. It's crazy! God has this tremendous chaotic mess, and decides to redeem mankind and the world through one man, Abraham, and a barren woman, Sarah. What a plan! It is a pattern that is repeated over and over in scripture. Yahweh seems to just love beginning with nothing at all or something broken and small, then astound us with the impossible!

Well, Abraham is long dead by the opening of Exodus. His family has been living in Egypt for 400 years. That original family is now organized under the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. A family of 70 going into Egypt has been "fruitful and multiplied" as God commanded in Genesis. The Hebrews now number many thousands. Surprisingly these immigrants have not assimilated. They have a unique identity. Those four hundred years forged them into a nation. Israel remembers Abraham and their God. Pretty phenomenal after four hundred years of living in a powerful Egyptian civilization with a dramatically different worldview.

Long long before, the LORD predicted this four hundred year exile to Abraham in Genesis 15:13. "Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions."

Israel is God's chosen people, right? So why four hundred years of affliction, oppression, and eventually genocide? Why suffering? God does not give us an answer. Instead he says, "I will be with you." As Alec Motyer reflects in his commentary on Exodus, "Neither in Genesis nor elsewhere in the Bible is this prolonged adversity explained. There is never any suggestion that this banishment to Egypt was because of 'sin' or some failure on Jacob's part."

In fact, before moving his family to Egypt, Jacob carefully consults with the LORD, who reassures him in Genesis 46:1-4. "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also bring you up again." So Jacob went to Egypt by the will and word of God.

God's sovereignty is one major theme of Exodus. Motyer notes, "This is the mystery of the divine government of history, whether on the national, domestic or individual level: the great and loving God is in control, and because he is truly sovereign he works out his purposes in his way, not ours. He offers no explanations, but grants his people

enough insight into his ways, his character, his intentions and his changeless faithfulness so that, however dark the day, they can live by faith and be sustained by hope.” Trust and confidence in Yahweh’s goodness and sovereignty is a long long lesson that he teaches Moses and the Hebrew people as they often reluctantly follow Yahweh out of Egypt and through the wilderness.

My husband, Ed and I are learning this very lesson. Ed is afflicted with chronic leukemia and Parkinson’s Disease. I admit, it’s an up and down battle. But together we are learning the daily lesson of trust, not blind trust but *confident* trust. We can look back and see God’s repeated faithfulness down through many years. His faithfulness builds our confidence. Some days we may feel overcome with loss, sadness and suffering, but we can open up to him, fellowship with him, pour out our hearts to him. God is sovereign and faithful. What he has done in the past, he will do in the future as sure as the sun rises in the morning. He is with you. You may not recognize it in the moment, but he will not let you down. God proved it by sending his Son, the friend of sinners, who experienced betrayal but never did nor ever will betray anyone who comes to him for help. We live in the victory of proven hope.

Covenant is the second theme of the Book Exodus. God’s faithfulness to his Covenant drives the entire action of the Book. What is this covenant? The Covenant consists of promises that arise from the free decision and will of God. Promises made first to Abraham, enhanced with David, clarified in Jeremiah, and echoed in the New Testament with Jesus’ declaration, “This cup is the New Covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.” Luke 22:20

Abraham entered the Covenant God made with him by faith. It was not a reward for his obedience. Abraham often ignored God’s way and relied on his own judgment. Yet, he slowly grew to trust that God would bring about his promises in his time and his way. Yahweh pledged himself to Abraham and his descendants. From beginning to end, God’s covenant relationship with his people is based on grace and not their merits.

The whole story of Exodus is a covenant narrative. The God who pledged himself to Abraham and his descendants remained faithful. He had made promises and intended to keep them, and when his moment came, honor them he did. How God upholds his promises is the mainspring of our study this year. This Covenant theme binds Exodus into the whole Bible, and leads directly to the life and teaching of Jesus. For Jesus is the one and only human who lives the perfect Covenant life for us all.

At the heart of the Exodus Covenant action two massive events come together: the name of the Lord is given new clarity and the blood of the lamb is placed at the heart of the covenant sacrifice of the Passover.

Revealing God’s character and will for his people, Israel, is the third theme of the Book of Exodus. Watch closely how Yahweh reveals himself first to Moses and second as he acts to save a stubborn and difficult people. Marvel at God’s faithfulness and desire to

live with his people, “I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, *who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them*. I am the Lord their God” (29:45-46) For the Lord, redemption is always for the sake of relationship. In fact, God announces that “Israel is my first born son.”

Yes, there is discipline because of sin. But notice God’s first impulse is mercy not judgment; steadfast, faithful, and forgiving love. Out of Yahweh’s nature pours a desire to live with his people. God’s original intent in Genesis. This same Exodus theme echos all the way into Revelation 21:3-4. “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” God’s plan will finally become a reality.

At the heart of the Passover rescue of Israel we find the fourth theme of Exodus: the foreshadowing of the Messiah as the blood of the lamb. Think of John the Baptist as he pointed to Jesus before His baptism and declared, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. Before the Hebrews escape captivity in Egypt, it will be the blood of the Passover lamb that saves the sons of Israel. The Passover lamb in Exodus anticipates the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God in the New Testament.

Scripture presents two parallel sons of God: one in the Old and one in the New Testament. In Exodus, God speaks of Israel as His first born son. As you walk through Exodus, think ahead to the ways that Jesus’ life will follow the pattern of Israel: going in and out of Egypt as a child, tempted in the wilderness, threatened by national rulers, subjected to suffering. Exodus is the story of Israel, a son of God who repeatedly fails and needs salvation on the way through the wilderness. The Gospels tell the story of Jesus, who brings salvation to a wilderness world; perfect and righteous at every test. God’s Son who defeats sin and death for us.

While telling the story of Exodus, Moses employs a Chiasmus. A Chiasmus is a literary pattern in which a sequence of events, concepts or elements are repeated and enhanced in reverse order. This type of parallelism is a common ancient method of storytelling. The structure is really quite brilliant. The purpose of the pattern was to help listeners remember or memorize essential knowledge at a time when literacy was rare and scrolls were few. A Chiasmus could be used in short verses or entire books. Here is what that looks like in Exodus. [On the Board: Exodus ‘Chiasmus’ per Alec Motyer, p. 10].

- A Building for Pharaoh (1-5)
 - B The lamb of God (6-12)
 - C The companion God (13-18)
 - D The grace of God and the law of God (19-24)
 - C₂ The indwelling God (25-31),
 - B₂ The golden calf (32-34)
- A₂ Building for God (35-40)

The story of Exodus tells how the Lord delivered his people out of slavery in Egypt, and led them to Mt. Sinai, renewed his covenant relationship with them, and came to dwell in their midst in his tabernacle. Exodus ends before Yahweh reveals the way Israel is to live in harmony with him. The remaining books of Moses, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, will continue the narrative and give flesh and bones to the Law. Joshua follows with a detailed account of what happens after Moses dies and the Hebrews enter Canaan under the rule and reign of Yahweh.

Exodus is a story within a story. Exodus is the theme of redemption that echos throughout scripture. Redemption from what to what? From sin and separation to life and wholeness; redemption from slavery to freedom as children of our Heavenly Father. Consider how the story of Exodus matches our journey with Christ; out of slavery to sin, through the wilderness and into the Promised Land.

I'm going to close our introduction with part of Psalm 90, a prayer written by Moses. In it he reminds us that life is brief and time is precious, not to be wasted. Those who trust in God, he joyfully blesses with good work to do and an everlasting harvest of fruit. So love those you see today. Rejoice in them. Today you are planting seeds that will blossom and grow into eternity.

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
 from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
 You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”
 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past,
 or as a watch in the night. You sweep them away as with a flood;
 they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning:
 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.
 For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.
 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.
 For all our days pass away under your wrath;
 we bring our years to an end like a sigh.
 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty;
 yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.
 Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?
 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.
 Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants!
 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
 that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” Come Lord Jesus, Amen