

JANUARY 22

Exodus 1, 2, 3 and 4

Exodus 5-7 (also referenced Jan. 23)

Today we began a trip through the second book of the Pentateuch as you read Exodus 1 thru 4. Like the Book of Genesis, the Book of Exodus comes to us, traditionally, from the pen of Moses. Since both the Old Testament and the New Testament writers (John 5:46-47, 7:19; Acts 3:22; and Romans 10:5) say that Moses wrote Exodus, I am quite content to believe that.

The English title of the "Book of Exodus" actually derives from the Septuagint, (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). It means "going out." It is easy to remember if you think about the homonym "Exit Us".

Now there is a big debate that rages all about the book of Exodus, and that concerns the date of the Israelites departure from Egypt. It would take the whole of the time we have allotted for the whole week to fill you in on all of the positions and reasons on this one, but you probably should at least know that there are two basic schools of thought.

The early date defended by many conservative scholars fixes the exodus at about 1445 B.C. and is derived from I Kings 6:1, which says that the exodus took place 480 years prior to the fourth year of King Solomon.

The later date would place the departure of Moses and his people at about 1280 B.C. Some conservative scholars and most liberals and archaeologist favor this view.

That said, the Book of Exodus begins by referring back to the Book of Genesis. This is, I am sure, a deliberate literary device used to "link" the two books together. This reference back to Genesis 46 is a literary bridge. Seventy people, including Joseph and his sons, went down to Egypt, (the Septuagint text of Genesis 46 and Acts chapter 7 say it was 75 people because they include Joseph's grandchildren as well,) but by the time of Moses, that original 70 has become a large nation - a little extrapolation from the census Moses took in Numbers chapter 1 after the Exodus would indicate a nation of nearly 2,000,000 people! Even in the harsh conditions of slavery, the Israelites were multiplying like rabbits.

What we need to see in this is that God keeps His word. He promised Abraham that He would make a great nation of his descendants and that He would bless them exceedingly and that in fact occurred!

Even when conditions are imposed to slow the growth of Israel, the growth continues. When the drastic order goes out to kill all the male children, the midwives disobey and Israel keeps on growing!! There are two promises that God made to Abraham for us to remember here:

1. That He would make a great nation of his descendants. That promise was originally given in Genesis 12, and repeated several more times.

2) In Genesis 15, God told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a country not their own, that they would be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years and that after that they would come out with great possessions. He even told Abraham why this would be - because the sin-quotient of the Amorites, the people living in Canaan - was not yet complete. God kept His word to Abraham and the Amorites.

Pharaoh is threatened by this multiplication, so Pharaoh tries to kill off the male babies. Pharaoh's attempted genocide and the destruction of the Jewish nation is but the first of a long series of attempts to destroy the children of Abraham. God's purpose for that nation will stand, however, and not one of them will succeed.

Well, I am very sure today that the most important thing these chapters have to contribute to our understanding is what they teach us about God Himself. The self-revelation of God takes a huge leap forward in this experience before a burning bush on the backside of the desert of Midian. Let's see how much we can learn about God from this passage.

First, let me quickly note with you that Moses' meeting at the burning bush was a "theophany" - a physical encounter with God. The "angel of the Lord" appeared to him in this bush that was on fire but not being consumed. The identity of the "angel" is not in question. It is God Himself...Jehovah, "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." This angel of the Lord, who we already saw in Genesis, will appear several more times in the Old Testament story. Whenever He is encountered, we may consider it to be a theophany, a physical appearance of God Himself.

Second, let me call your attention to some characteristics of God that Moses is about to discover as he stands before the burning bush. In this passage, we find out that God Seeks, Speaks, Saves and Sends - sound like a good sermon outline, eh? Moses learned that day that God was really out there, and that God actually looks for people. He is a God who SEEKS.

Moses was tending sheep. He was minding his own business. He was not looking for God, but God was looking for Moses! God took the initiative - He got Moses' attention. He called to Moses. He took the INITIATIVE. How does it make you feel that God sought you out because he loves you so much?

The next thing Moses learned was that God is a God who SPEAKS. God talked to Moses. Again, to us that may not appear to be such a remarkable thing, but remember, the last two people to have that kind of encounter with God were Jacob and Joseph. As far as we can tell, after Joseph there is 400 years of total silence on the part of God. Then all of a sudden, God talks through a bush. Yowza! Now Moses knows God is real and has a plan.

Then Moses heard God say the most remarkable thing: *"I have seen the misery of my people...I have heard them crying, I am concerned about their suffering...I have come down to deliver them..."* Moses learned, and so must we, that the God who seeks and speaks is also a God who SAVES.

And he learned one more characteristic of God - God SENDS. He commissions the one He has called and sends him to represent God before the Pharaoh and all of Egypt. I believe that every Christian can relate, at each of these points, to Moses' experience of God. It certainly provides an adequate framework out of which to interpret my Christian experience, a God who seeks - and speaks - and saves - and sends.

The fourth area that calls for our attention today is the revelation of the name of God that God Himself gives to Moses. *"Who shall I say has sent me?"* Tell them, God says, *"I AM has sent you."* - The Lord (Jehovah) -- the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...*This is my name forever...the name by which I am to be remembered for generation to generation.*" This passage - along with one in chapter 6 which we will see tomorrow - is extremely important as a record of the self-revelation of God.

Aside from the redemptive themes already mentioned of covenants/promises in this passage, I'd also like to mention that this passage has redemptive themes that foreshadow Christ: You might want to write this on the page entitled "Foreshadowing Jesus."

- Moses, born of the house of Levi-future priestly line, foreshadowing Jesus our Great High Priest
- Moses, the deliverer of the Israelites, foreshadowing to Jesus being the true deliverer for all people.
- Moses, the prophet, foreshadowing to Jesus being the ultimate prophet to come.
- Moses and Aaron, the advocate for God's people, Jesus our advocate before the Father.

It all points to Jesus!

And this is Mark Ashton reminding you that man does not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.