

God Raises Up a Deliverer

Exodus 1:1-2:10; 2:23-3:12

Fall Old Testament Sermon Series on Exodus

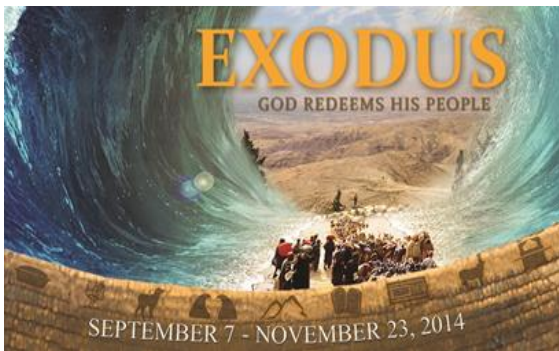
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

September 14, 2014

TEXTS: Exodus 1:1-2:10; 2:23-3:12

We continue this morning in our fall series on the Book of Exodus. We continue this series that we began last Sunday with an overview of all of Exodus. This morning, we turn to the first



narrative block of Exodus in which we hear Pharaoh's instructions to kill, but also the voice of God calling for redemption. The Old Testament has a way of teaching us through narrative and story, large canvases that paint a picture for us of Who the Lord is and who we are called to be in response. Last Sunday, I mentioned several reasons why I love the Exodus, and I want to remind you of these. I love the

Exodus because it's the Gospel of the Old Testament; God reaches out and acts to save. I love it because it's the literary center of gravity of the Old Testament; more time is spent here than any place else, and there are more references to these events than any other. I love the Exodus because it reveals the will, the identity, and the character of God. We learn the name of God in Exodus and the revelation of His will and character. We will see that this morning in a vivid way. I love it because it reveals our identity as God's people. The first mention of Israel outside of the Bible is on a stele built by one of the pharaohs, and it mentions Israel as a people; not necessarily a place, but a people. That's who we are called to be in Exodus: a saved, redeemed people with an obligation to God in covenant that involves privilege, but also restraint.

This morning, we look at the canvas of the early chapters of Exodus, and I want us to look at three movements in these chapters.

The first movement is to see **God's hidden providence** in Exodus 1. I want us to see the character of God and learn to trust God, even when we can't see exactly what He is doing.

The second movement is to see **how God raises up a deliverer** in Exodus 2. He does this in a way that is consistent with the character of God.

The third movement is to see **how God sends a deliverer to save**.

Each of these has application for all of us this morning, so let's jump right into Exodus 1.

Exodus begins with a list of names. You might think many of the names in the Old Testament are unfamiliar. This is thankfully a batch of familiar names. It is the sons of Israel listed by name. It is very important that they are named, as names are significant in Scripture. Names reveal identity and personhood, and these names, heads of families, are listed as going down into Egypt. Each of them receives a name. It is God's own name that we hear in Exodus 3, and yet it is the absence of the pharaoh's name that is significant, as we will see in Exodus. God knows the number of the hairs on our heads, though that number changes daily. God is involved in our lives. He knows our names. One of the greatest compliments you can give someone is to really know their name and use that name. It is critical to make the effort to learn a foreign name, to speak it well. Ask someone to write that name down if you're unclear how to pronounce it. Exodus begins with a list of these names going down into Egypt. We then read that there is a rapid passing of time, that the generation of Joseph and all his brothers dies, and yet Israel multiplies in the land. We read in Exodus 1:6-7:

“Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.”

The language used in these verses should remind those familiar with the Bible of Genesis 1:28 when the Lord says:

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.”

Remember that the blessing on humanity is to fill the earth, not so the earth will become overcrowded and we will have greenhouse gas problems and environmental issues, but the command is to fill the earth with the image and likeness of God, so that the knowledge of God and the appreciation of the wonder in the Person of God extends to the uttermost limits of the earth. God makes humanity in His image with a desire that the earth would be filled with those like you and like me who can uniquely see, behold, and respond back to God in praise. When you look into the depths of your own being and say, “Why am I here?”, the Bible's best answer is that you are here to behold the Person of God and respond back to Him in praise. Offering God praise and worship is the fulfillment of our reason for being, and the blessing of God is upon this group of people. They are multiplying.

The Bible passes over 400 years without mentioning another word. All the rest of Exodus takes place within about a two-year period. The Bible is not presented to us in chronological sequence of equal weight. We zoom pass 400 years into Exodus 1:8:

“Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt.”

Scholars are divided as to who this new king is. It could be the 18th or 19th dynasty in Egypt. In the narrative framework of Exodus, there are two pharaohs: a pharaoh and his son. There are two sets of candidates as to who these could be. The first of the two sets of candidates is



Thutmose III. He was a great warrior and powerful king in Egypt. He conducted 17 different campaigns, and he is the founder of the 18th dynasty. In his temples at Karnak, he depicts himself as a great warrior king. This is a famous image of Thutmose III on the walls of Karnak. It is a massive, impressive structure and would have been painted in antiquity. The structure is huge, and here we see Thutmose standing. He has that tremendous pectoral definition that everyone aspires to have. He also has a smiting mace in his hand. If this were painted, you would be able to see it really clearly. In his one hand, he has a mace, and in the other hand, he has a cluster of hair of his enemies. He is picking them up as a cluster and ready

to smash their skulls. They really knew how to build buildings that intimidated. Thutmose III is a possible candidate. His son Amenhotep would then be the pharaoh of the Exodus events. The other candidate is Seti I who was the founder of the 19th dynasty. Seti I was also a great warrior king, and here we see Seti I doing that same



basic conquering activity. These were conquering kings, mighty kings, but they did not know Joseph, the Bible says. They didn't know that Joseph had saved their lives and their whole civilization. Seti's son is Ramses II, shown here in this image of him in a war chariot. Ramses was the greatest of builders of the 19th dynasty.

His Temple, Abu Simbel, still stands as an icon of the power and strength of ancient Egypt. Each statue of Ramses at the base of Abu Simbel is 66 feet tall, carved out of solid rock. It is one of

these pharaohs who says in Exodus 1:10:



“Look,’ he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’”

These pharaohs perceive a threatening presence from this group and so they instituted a strategy of containment that unfolds in three stages.

The first stage of the strategy is: **State Slavery**. This is the same decision that many powerful rulers make even in our present time. If there is a large group of people in our midst, a minority population, the best use to make of them is exploitative state labor; and so they are conscripted. Exodus 1:11 says:

“So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh.”

They built cities for the benefit of the pharaohs. They were built to store military weapons. They were garrison towns. We read in Exodus that the Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard labor, with brick and mortar and work of the fields. They worked them ruthlessly. The image of foreigners or slaves making bricks is well attested in the inscriptions and tomb paintings of ancient Egypt. This is an image of foreigners working to make mud bricks for construction. Alluvial mud from the Nile was the construction material of choice. Often the walls that circled around towns were 60 feet high. It is calculated that just one royal



construction project required 24,500,000 bricks. The average worker, using techniques that can be replicated today, was required to produce 3000 mud bricks per day. The technique is very simple and repetitive. You think your job is boring? Try this: flatten out mud; draw water from a canal or pool; step in piles of the mud; form the mud with straw to hold it together; form it with a wooden mold; let it dry in the sun for three days; come by and flip it over to dry another three days. It then becomes a usable, construction brick. Three thousand a day! An ancient Egyptian text describing trades says brick making is the lowest on the totem pole. This is an ancient Egyptian voice describing the slave brick maker:

“He is dirtier than vines or pigs from treading under his mud. His clothes are stiff with clay; his leather belt is going to ruin. He is miserable. His sides ache. His arms are destroyed with technical work. He eats the bread of his fingers. He washes himself only once a season. He is simply wretched through and through.”

The Bible says in a very gentle way that they were oppressed with forced labor, grinding them to dust, and yet, the Bible says in Exodus 1:12, that despite this forced labor, to the pharaoh’s astonishment:

“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread.”

It uses the same language of Genesis. God's hand is with these people. Though they are exploited, crushed, ground to nothing, yet they are increasing.

So, Pharaoh adopts a second stage to his strategy: **Private Infanticide**. In Exodus 1:15-16, the king of Egypt says to Hebrew midwives:

“The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ‘When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.’”

I just love that these midwives make it into the Bible, Shiphrah and Puah. I can't wait to meet them someday. Shiphrah means *beautiful*; Puah means *a blossom*. It could be that these two midwives were in charge of midwifery. Maybe they were like heads of the guilds of midwives. Pharaoh comes to them and says that oppressing the people is not succeeding, so what we need to do is simple infanticide. When the child was born, you look at the birth stool, if it’s a boy, kill him; if it's a girl, let her live. It's amazing to me that in the pro-life movement in the church, we don't make more use of this passage in Exodus 1. This is a tremendous pro-life text, but actually, I’ve never heard it used. There is another tremendous pro-life text in Exodus 21, which we will get to. Here, these women refuse to take the life of a newborn child, and the reason given in Scripture is that they feared God and so they would not cross that boundary to take life that God has given. They feared God and they didn't do what the king of Egypt had told them to do. Remember that guy with a mace and the hair? That's not a guy that you just disregard lightly. But they feared God more than the giant man on the wall of the temple, with a mace. Is God the One that you fear the most? These two women let the boys live, and the king summons them and says in Exodus 1:18:

“Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?”

They find a very pleasant and satisfying way of explaining their behavior. Commentators throughout the centuries have wondered: “Did they lie?” Most of you know they didn't. They

just said in Exodus 1:19:

"Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

What could they do? They got there and the children were already born, it was already over. We have some close friends who are missionaries now in a difficult part of the world. As we knew them, the birth times for their children kept getting narrower and narrower. The first child was six hours labor and delivery. The second child was two hours labor and delivery. We knew them as it came time for the third child to be delivered. We were encouraging them that they should get right to the hospital at the first sign of labor. I knew the husband well, and I encouraged him to not wait to get his wife to the hospital since her times were getting narrower and narrower. He said, "Yeah, yeah, but I want my wife to be comfortable." We finally got the news that the third child delivery happened. It was start to finish about 34 minutes, and they didn't make it to the hospital. They made it to the parking lot of the hospital, and the medical personnel rushed out and delivered the baby in the car. They have more children now, and they are more proactive. They go in right away. But, these women say God is with them and the children are born before they arrive to help. They disobey the king because they fear God: a profound lesson. The king of Egypt, though, turns then to ratchet up to the highest of all stakes. He switches from state slavery, from infanticide, and now proceeds to the third stage of his strategy: **Open Genocide**. He speaks in Exodus 1:22 to all his people and says:

"Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

The Bible paints this picture of risk, difficulty, oppression, and violence. Against this backdrop then we see the God of the Scriptures raise up a deliverer in Exodus 2. In the midst of this difficult time, Exodus 2 teaches us theology the way the Old Testament often does, with a story. Against this dark background, we read in Exodus 2:1-2:

"Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months."

When we hear her baby is a son, we think danger. But she hid this child for three months. I said last week that the Exodus prefigures the work of Christ, and this is a place where we see this vividly. After 400 years of affliction and stress upon His people, God's answer is the birth of a child. This will happen again. A child is born, and the parents, whose names we eventually learn in Exodus 6, are Amram and Jocebed, could hide him no longer, so his mother places the child into a basket. The Hebrew text uses an unusual term for basket. It uses the term for an ark. This word is used only here and in Genesis, in the narrative of Noah. The vocabulary of the building of the ark of Noah is used here in that this little mini-ark is coated on the inside with bitumen and pitch and placed among the reeds at the edge of the river. This is a moment of great

pathos. This mother releases the child into this basket. This child is, in fact, the third-born. There is an older sister, whose name we will eventually know as Miriam, and then Aaron. Now this newborn boy is placed among the reeds, it is said, and the mother waits. The sister goes and runs along the river's edge. Can you imagine the older sister just watching to see what would happen? She watches, and Pharaoh's own daughter comes to bathe with all her attendants. She sees the basket; she opens the basket, and she sees a baby crying. Most people, when they see a baby crying, are moved. Pharaoh's daughter sees this baby crying, and the baby's tears open the daughter of Pharaoh's heart. She says in Exodus 1:6:

"This is one of the Hebrew babies."

She looks at him, and then, in an act of tremendous courage, Miriam, Moses' older sister, breaks the silence with a question. She asks the daughter of Pharaoh in Exodus 1:7:

"Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

She knows the decree; she knows that what's supposed to happen is that Pharaoh's daughter picks up the basket, sees that it's a boy, and dumps it in the Nile. Instead, she says, "Shall I go and ask someone to nurse the child?" The daughter of Pharaoh says: "Yes, go." So she goes and gets Moses' mother. Pharaoh's daughter says in Exodus 1:9:

"Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you."

That's the God of the Bible right there.

The name of God is never mentioned in this text except that the midwives feared God. This is what we mean when we talk about the providence of God. Is not God superintending this whole scene? Is God not a God of the details? He is orchestrating this. The child grew; is raised in Pharaoh's own household; becomes the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and she names him *Moses*, which is an Egyptian name meaning *son* or *born of*. It has a double meaning though, for in Hebrew, the name *Moses* is the active form which means *to draw out of the water*. So this little child is God's action to raise up a deliverer. Moses is raised in Pharaoh's own household, receives a royal education, court customs, Egyptian language and culture. God has placed him here for His purposes. Do you believe that God has placed you where He has placed you for His purposes? Do you believe that the background He is giving you and the languages that you speak are for His purposes in the world? Exodus 2 teaches us that they are.

The narrative continues. God does not just raise up a deliverer, but He then sends a deliverer to save. At the end of Exodus 2, we read that after a long period, the king of Egypt died, so we're past the first Pharaoh, the one who designs these plans of genocide, to the son, the new king, either Amenhotep or Ramses II. This new Pharaoh is the one that we will encounter from here

forward. The Israelites cried out for help, and their cry went up to God. Exodus 2:24 is one of the most theocentric, God-centered verses of the whole Bible, and I love this verse. Exodus 2:24-25 says:

"God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them."

These verses tell us: God heard, God remembered, God looked, and God knew. Four verbs, and God is the subject of them all. God sees our situation and responds. He does not just make provision for a deliverer to be raised up and whose life was spared, but He then commissions him and sends him, and this is the narrative of Exodus 3: God sends one to save. We read that as Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law, God met him there in this very wilderness where he'd been for 40 years. Notice again the rapid selectivity of the Bible's narrative. We read that the angel of God appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. The bush is called *Sinai*; it's a little miniature, flaming bush, again, an unusual term here. Moses sees that the Sinai was on fire but does not burn up, and so he goes to see the sight. God calls to him from the midst of this bush. God says in Exodus 3:5:

"Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

God reveals Himself as the God of Genesis in Exodus 3:6:

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Moses hid his face. God's way of introducing Himself recalls God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:14-15 where God says:

"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."

The Lord tells Moses the time of this fulfillment is now. He says in Exodus 3:8-9:

"I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them."

God says He has come down to rescue them in His own power and strength. The surprising element of this God, who is so powerful and mighty, is that He says: "I have come down to save, and the way that I will do that is that I am going to send you." He could have done it without Moses. God could accomplish global missions without any of us. I've met people who live so far from any worshiping Christian community that they were unreachable by human means, and yet Jesus Christ just went Himself and introduced Himself in a dream or vision so they would

believe. He can do it without us, and yet the God of Scripture says to Moses in Exodus 3:10:

“So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

Moses rightly replies in Exodus 3:11:

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

When called to serve, we should all reply in the same way: “Who am I that I should serve as a Sunday school teacher; who am I that I should greet people; who am I that I should represent the Lord?” Moses says: “Who am I?” When we look into ourselves, we find the depths of our own inadequacy, and yet God's answer to all of these objections is the same as His answer to Moses in Exodus 3:12:

“I will be with you.”

God's reply to our utter insufficiency and inadequacy is simply and profoundly: “I'll be with you.” Doesn't that make all the difference? “I'll be with you. I'm sending you. I have asked you to go, and I'll be with you.” That changes everything. Moses says: “Lord, how will I know that You are going to be with me?” and God's answer to that question is a series of signs and promises. But, He gives the first statement of assurance in Exodus 3:12:

“And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

That's how you'll know. How do you find out if God is with you? You have to say ‘yes.’ You can't find out in advance. God says: “You will know I'm with you when you say ‘yes’ to Me. I'll send you; you go, do what I tell you to do; speak the words I tell you to speak; and you will know that I'm with you because you're actually going to make it right back to this very spot. But, you won't be by yourself.” The first ‘you’ of Exodus 3:12 is singular: When *you* have brought people out. The second ‘you’ is plural: *you all*. The first ‘you’ is: you go where I send you, and the second ‘you’ is: you all will have the consequence and blessing. That is, you will be back here with what will turn out to be 600,000 families plus a whole host of foreigners. Is it worth going?

Let me apply this in three ways:

Number one: **Trust the hidden hand of God because you know His heart.** God is working all around Exodus 1 and 2. We see it clearly in retrospect, but there are times in our lives when it doesn't seem that God is doing anything. I call this the theological reservoir. It is like the water is just trickling in, and yet the level is rising. Then, at the moment of God's action, it seems that the water just pours forward. You can't, however, have the raging current of God's activity without the years, months, weeks, or however long, of waiting while God fills the tank of His purpose. We have dear friends who just completed an adoption of a set of twins from Ethiopia.

As they were waiting, these children had no idea of all that was happening for their benefit. They couldn't perceive it. They weren't aware of the hundreds of people praying for them, meetings in courtrooms for them. They couldn't see it, and yet, when the time came, God's answer came with the mighty rush of His faithful promise. Trust the hidden hand of God because you know His heart.

Number two: **Practice reverent disobedience because you fear God first.** There are times when you have to play the role of Siphrah and Puah. There are times when you have to say 'no' to the culture around you because you fear God first. There will be places in your lives when you have to exercise the courage of faith. There is a whole set of godly women in these chapters. We get our attention on Moses, and he deserves that focus, but there is a whole set of women who were faithful: Jocebed's actions with placing Moses in the basket; Siphrah and Puah; Miriam's courage; and Zipporah in Exodus 4.

Number three: **Whenever God calls you, say 'yes' because of His sufficiency.** You look into your own heart, and every time you find, "I don't have what I need in myself." But, in Exodus 3:12, God says: "I will be with you," and you will know that by the fruit of your ministry. Go forward in His name; you experience Him only by the going. You don't get the experience of God's saying, "I am with you," by staying back. You actually go forward, and He says, "I will be with you." Ephesians 2:10 says:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

"I'm sending you," God says, and God accomplishes more than Moses could ever ask or imagine, and He will do that with each one of us who say 'yes' to His call and invitation.

Would you pray with me that our eyes and ears will be open to God's speaking and calling to us this morning? Amen.