

# Old Testament Survey – [standandspeak.org](http://standandspeak.org)

## Bi-160 (A) – Old Testament Survey Covington Theological Seminary 9/10/08 Exodus

Genesis closes with the people of God relatively settled within the land of Egypt. Jehovah's providence had guided them into Egypt, where they were spared from famine. In the book of Exodus, Egypt quickly becomes an inhospitable place for God's people, as a king arises in Egypt that does not know Joseph (1:8). In Exodus, the sovereign God that had saved his people by bringing them into Egypt saves them again by bringing them out of Egypt.

"Is there in all history a more amazing spectacle than the Exodus? – a more significant piece of architecture than the Israelite Tabernacle? – a greater human figure than Moses? – a more influential national epoch than the founding of the Israel theocracy? All these are found in this second book of Scripture. It is the *fons et origo* – the very found and origin of the national life, law, and organized religion of Israel."<sup>i</sup>

-J. Sidlow Baxter

Possibly no Old Testament story line is as well-known as that of the early chapters of Exodus. The story is a human drama that crosses religious lines and seems to resonate with people, regardless of their faith. Yet, Exodus is much more than a historical drama. Exodus is (as all Scripture) an unfolding of the character and nature of the one, true God.

"Every popular retelling or movie about the Exodus, from Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* to *The Prince of Egypt*, misses this entirely. Usually the Hebrew people are presented as types of American colonists or African-American slaves. Moses is some combination of Washington and Jefferson, Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, liberator and lawgiver, concerned above all else for human liberty. But this story is not primarily about human liberty... In fact, Exodus directly challenges the idea that God does everything for humanity's sake. Humans *are not* the ultimate purpose of creation. God's own glory is!"<sup>ii</sup>

-Mark Dever

When we study Exodus, we must be careful not to miss the proverbial forest for the trees. We should not be so moved by the plight of God's people that we miss the God whose plan it was to save them from that plight. We must not be so captivated with the towering figure of Moses that we miss the God who called Moses when he was nothing but an 80 year-old shepherd. The glory of God is theme of Exodus!

The glory of God is manifested in the book of Exodus when we observe three specific truths about God.

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First of all, in Exodus we see:

## I. THE RULE OF GOD

As the story of Exodus begins to unfold, beginning with the life of Moses and leading on to the eventual exit of God's people from Egypt (ch.1-11), one thing becomes abundantly clear. God is not reactionary. God is ruling. He is not adjusting His plan to the affairs of men; He is adjusting the affairs of men to His plan.

Just as the sovereignty of God was obvious in the life of Joseph, with his arrival and rise in Egypt, the sovereign rule of God is equally visible in the deliverance of Israel from their captivity.

The rule of God in Exodus is seen:

### A. Over individual lives

The characters in the book of Exodus are as compelling as the story itself. Each figure that appears on the stage of this epic clearly plays a part in God's plan to redeem His people for His glory. There are no incidental lives. The God who gives life does so with purpose.

The rule of God over individual lives is seen *in those that follow Him*. Indisputably, the central human character in Exodus is Moses. He looms large in this book, and in the remainder of the Biblical canon.

There is no denying that his entire life is colored by the sovereign work of God. His *ride* on the Nile, his *rescue* by Pharaoh's daughter, his *rearing* in Egypt's palace, his *retreat* to the desert, and his eventual *return* as God's emissary, are all subsequent links in a chain of God's rule over the life of this historic figure.

Who else could so order it that Pharaoh's eventual nemesis, and the man that God used to topple the Egyptian empire was none other than the boy once adopted by the royal family?

The lives of God's people are not the results of random chance, only occasionally interrupted by God. No, He rules over the lives of those that follow Him, even before they are able to follow Him! He is sovereign over the womb from which His children emerge, and the where they go from that womb!

In Exodus, God's rule over individual lives is seen not only in those that follow Him, but also *in those that fight Him*. A testament to the rule of God over individual lives is not only seen in Moses, but also in the man that so vehemently opposed Moses and His God.

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Even in the figure of Pharaoh, so hard and defiant, the rule of God is displayed. In chapter 9, and verse 16, God sends a message to Pharaoh and says, “...for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” Pharaoh’s resistance did not hinder the plan of God. In fact, since God’s plan was to bring about His own glory, Pharaoh’s resistance actually served to show that God’s glory is greater than kings and rulers.

Exodus reveals the rule of God, not only over individual lives, but also:

### **B. Over natural laws**

Exodus is a book of signs and wonders. Strange and miraculous events mark the story of Israel’s journey from slavery to salvation. Again, the glory of God is seen in how His power overrules the natural laws of earth in order to accomplish His ends.

The rule of God over nature is seen in *the plagues he sends*. In chapters 8-12, as negotiations with a hardened Pharaoh drag on, God sends a sequence of 10 plagues upon the land of Egypt. Only Goshen, where His people dwell is unaffected by these episodes. The plagues included the turning of the Nile into blood, frogs, lice and flies, death of livestock, hail and darkness, locusts, and finally the death of every first born child in Egypt (again, with the exception of Israel).

The unnatural phenomena were clear displays of God’s rule over nature and her power. Though Pharaoh’s wizards attempted to replicate the work of God, their parlor tricks did match up to the power of God.

The rule of God over natural laws is seen in Exodus, not only in the plagues He sends, but also in *the provision he showed*. God bent the boundaries of natural law, not only in punishing Egypt, but also in providing for Israel.

Throughout Exodus, God’s miraculous provision for His people is seen as He pillages the coffers of Egypt for them, parts the Red Sea, and provides food and water in the desert. Israel is able to “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” who rules over the laws of nature and the universe.

In Exodus, the glory of God is displayed not only through the rule of God, but also secondly by:

## **II. THE REDEMPTION OF GOD**

While the glory of God is the central theme of all Scripture, including Exodus, in the book of Exodus, that glory is chiefly revealed through the work of redemption.

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“When it comes to the message and theme of the book of Exodus, it seems as plain as the nose on your face. From the beginning of the book to the end of it, it is not difficult to perceive that we are constantly confronted with God’s redemptive purposes. The Lord Himself is the great Redeemer, and the people of Israel are the objects of His redeeming grace.”<sup>iii</sup>

-Tom Hayes

“The central doctrine of the book of Exodus is redemption, but this is not formally expounded, rather it is strikingly illustrated. In earliest times, God, it would seem, did not communicate to His people an explicit and systematic form of doctrine; instead, He instructed them, mainly, through His providential dealings and by means of types and symbols.”<sup>iv</sup>

-A.W. Pink

Beginning in chapter 12, we have the record of the Passover, and the night that God freed His people from Egypt. The story of the Passover is one that remains precious to Israel and to the Church because it portrays so clearly the redemptive work of God on behalf of His people.

In Exodus 12-18, we learn a couple of truths about the redemption of God. First of all, we note:

### **A. The method of redemption**

In chapter 12, the children of Israel are given very specific instruction regarding a lamb, and the blood shed in its sacrifice. On the night when God sent the death angel into the land of Egypt, only those that participated in this specifically prescribed method were spared from the touch of the death angel.

In considering the method of redemption, there is *theological value*. When we read the requirements that God placed upon all those that would escape the judgment of the final plague, we learn something about the character and nature of God. (i) We learn that redemption’s plan is specific. God did not prescribe many ways in which the people could be spared. There was only one way. The plan was not only specific; it was (ii) one that involved substitution. The shed blood of the innocent Lamb provided the basis on which the death angel would pass over.

The method of redemption not only holds theological value, but there is also *typological value*. Possibly nowhere in the Old Testament is there a clearer picture of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ than in the story of the Passover. The propitiation of Christ’s death is seen in the death of the lamb. The types of Christ in the Passover are numerous, and worthy of an extensive study.

In observing the redemption of God in Exodus, we note not only the method of redemption, but also:

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## B. The movement of redemption

After the redemptive work of the Passover lamb, the children of Israel begin their physical exodus from Egypt. Redemption is not just a message, it is a movement. In chapters 13-18, the movements of Israel are chronicled as they leave the fetters of Egypt behind.

The movement of redemption is *outward*. The whole plan of God from the genesis of Exodus was to remove His people from the bondage of Egypt. Redemption is a work of God bringing His people outward from the place in which they are lost.

The movement of redemption is not only outward, it is *onward*. In Exodus 3, when God appeared to Moses, He laid out His redemptive plan. Verse eight of that chapter says, “*And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey...*”

Redemption is an all encompassing work in which God brings His people out of bondage and on to blessing. Alan Redpath writes, “In other words, the deliverance from Egypt was only in preparation for the enjoyment of Canaan. The Passover, the shedding of blood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh’s hosts, all would have been useless unless they led to the place of rest in Canaan.”<sup>v</sup>

In Exodus, as you see God take His conquered, oppressed people, distinguish them from the Egyptians, unshackle them, and lead them from slavery to Sinai, you begin to see a picture of God’s larger plan of redemption for all of His people.

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it,  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb,  
Redeemed by His infinite mercy,  
His child and forever I am!*

In Exodus, God’s glory is revealed not only in the rule of God, and the redemption of God, but also finally through:

## III. THE REVELATION OF GOD

The first seventeen chapters of Exodus are by far the most familiar. Yet, the largest part of the book (ch. 18-40) is taken up with God’s revelation of Himself to His people through the giving of the Law and the instructions for the Tabernacle.

While there are some significant narratives remaining in Exodus (such as the incident of the golden calf), for the most part, the remainder of the book is a

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record of God's direct communication to Moses regarding the conduct He expected from His chosen people.

In the latter half of the book of Exodus, God directly reveals Himself to His people through:

### A. His precepts

From chapter 19, to the close of chapter 24, God reveals to Israel His Law. In this case, the Law does not just refer to the Ten Commandments, but covers numerous mandates that deal with moral, social, and religious life of Israel.

When the law of God is studied, it serves to reveal a couple of things about God. It reveals *His excellence*. The Law serves a clear purpose of revealing that Israel's redeemer is a completely holy God. "It was absolutely indispensable that the unique privileges conferred upon that elect nation, for the fulfilling of its high vocation, should be safeguarded by a reverential recognition of the inviolate holiness of God."<sup>vi</sup>

As God, through Moses, made clear to His people the precepts that should govern their lives, it revealed not only His excellence as a supremely holy God, but also *His expectations*. The Law of God, as recorded in Exodus shows the high standard that God places upon those that belong to Him. Freedom from Egypt by no means equated to freedom from responsibility. In fact, their redemption by God resulted in a covenant responsibility to God.

As God revealed Himself to His people in Exodus, He did so not only through His precepts, but also through:

### B. His presence

From chapter 25 to the conclusion of the book, God lays out for Moses the construction and requirements of the Tabernacle. The original plan is given to Moses during his forty days alone with God on Sinai (ch. 25-31). Then the people lapse into idolatry (ch. 32-34). After this sin is judged, the Tabernacle is constructed and completed near the close of the book.

Of the Tabernacle, Baxter says, "The Scriptures devote more room to the description of the Tabernacle and its appurtenances than to any other single subject. Its details are described with noticeable particularity."<sup>vii</sup> He goes on to point out the sternness with which God repeatedly charged Moses and Israel to explicitly follow His orders for the Tabernacle's construction. The importance of the Tabernacle is therefore obviously clear.

The Tabernacle was important as *a place*. No doubt, part of the reason why the Tabernacle is given such prominence and attention is because it would serve as

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the place in which the literal presence of God would dwell among His people. Exodus 40:34 says, *“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”* Whenever the children of Israel looked at the Tabernacle, they were looking at the literal, earthly dwelling of Jehovah. Is it any wonder that God gave such clear and detailed instructions for its construction?

The Tabernacle was important, not only as a place, but also as a *picture*. Though space does not allow in a survey of Exodus, a more detailed study of the Tabernacle finds in it numerous pictures of Christ, and the saving work He would accomplish as the Great High Priest.

“The Tabernacle was not designed with a view to any merely architectural impressiveness. It was designed to be a symbolical and typical expression of wonderful spiritual truth...”<sup>viii</sup>

A.W. Pink states that the key verse of Exodus is chapter 15, and verse 13. It says, *“Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.”* That is certainly a fitting verse, for it summarizes the fact that Exodus is all about God, His work, His people, and ultimately His glory.

We learn in the New Testament that the stories of the Old Testament were written for examples (I Cor. 10:6). The Christian that studies the book of Exodus will find much more than a dramatic narrative. They will find their Savior in the story of Israel’s redemption.

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<sup>i</sup> Baxter, J. Sidlow, Explore the Book, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1966), p. 75

<sup>ii</sup> Dever, Mark, The Message of the Old Testament, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2006), p. 100

<sup>iii</sup> Hayes, Tom, Paths in Exodus, (Paths Publications, Saluda, NC, 2006), p. 9

<sup>iv</sup> Pink, A.W., Gleanings in Exodus, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1976), p. 9

<sup>v</sup> Redpath, Alan, Victorious Christian Living, (Fleming H. Revell, Westwood, NJ, 1955), p. 20

<sup>vi</sup> Baxter, J. Sidlow, p.87

<sup>vii</sup> Baxter, J. Sidlow, p. 95

<sup>viii</sup> *ibid*