



Exodus 1-18

Transcript

Introduction

00:00-00:33

The book of Exodus. It's the second book of the Bible, and it picks up the storyline from the previous book, Genesis, which ended with Abraham's grandson Jacob leading his large family of 70 people down to Egypt.

Now, Jacob's 11th son, Joseph, had been elevated to second-in-command over Egypt, and he had saved his whole family in a famine. And so Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, offered the family to come live there as a safe haven. And so eventually Jacob dies there in Egypt, and Joseph and all his brothers do too.

Chapters 1-3

00:34-02:51

About 400 years pass, and the story of the exodus begins. Now, that name refers to the event that takes place in the first half of the book—Israel's exodus from Egypt. But the book has a second half that takes place at the foot of Mount Sinai.

In this video, we'll just focus on the first half, where centuries have passed and the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied and they filled the land. Now, this line is a deliberate echo back to the blessing that God gave all humanity back in the garden of Eden. And it reminds us of the big biblical story so far. Humanity forfeited God's blessing through sin and rebellion, and so God chose Abraham's family as the vehicle through which he would restore his blessing to all the world.

But the new pharaoh does not view Israel as a blessing. He actually thinks this growing Israelite immigrant group is a threat to his power. And so just as, in Genesis, humanity rebels against God's blessing, so here Pharaoh attempts to destroy the source of God's blessing, the Israelites. He brutally enslaves them in forced labor, and then he orders that all the Israelite boys be drowned in the Nile River.

Now Pharaoh, he is the worst character in the Bible so far. His kingdom epitomizes humanity's rebellion against God. Pharaoh has so redefined good and evil according to his own interests that even the murder of innocent children has become good to him. And so Egypt has become worse than Babylon from the book of Genesis. And so now Israel cries out for help against this new Babylon, and God responds.

God first turns Pharaoh's evil upside-down, as an Israelite mother throws her boy into the Nile River, but in a basket. And so he floats safely right down into Pharaoh's own family. He's named Moses, and he grows up to eventually become the man that God will use to defeat Pharaoh's evil.

In the famous story of the burning bush, God appears to Moses and commissions him to go to Pharaoh and order him to release the Israelites. And God says that he knows Pharaoh will resist, and so he will bring his judgment on Egypt in the form of plagues. Then God also says that he will harden Pharaoh's heart. And so we're introduced into the next main part of the story—the confrontation between God and Pharaoh.

Chapters 4-11

02:52-04:08

Now what does this mean that God says he'll harden Pharaoh's heart? It's super important to read this section of the story really closely and in sequence.

In Moses and Pharaoh's first encounter, we're told simply that Pharaoh's heart grew hard. There's no implication that God did anything. And so in response, God sends the first set of five plagues, each one confronting Pharaoh and one of his Egyptian gods. And each time, Moses offers a chance for Pharaoh to humble himself and to let the Israelites go. But after each plague, we're told that Pharaoh either hardened his heart or that his heart grew hard. He's doing this of his own will. And so, eventually, it's with the second set of five plagues that we begin to hear how God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

So the point of the story seems to be this: Even though God knew that Pharaoh would resist his will, God still offered him all these chances to do the right thing. But eventually Pharaoh's evil reaches a point of no return. I mean, even his own advisers think that he has lost his mind. And it's at that point that God takes over and bends Pharaoh's evil towards his own redemptive purposes. God lures Pharaoh into his own destruction as he saves his people, which is what happens next.

Chapters 12-18

04:08-05:22

With the final plague, it's the night of Passover. And God turns the tables on Pharaoh. Just as he killed the sons of the Israelites, so God will kill the firstborn in Egypt with a final plague. But unlike Pharaoh, God provides a means of escape through the blood of the lamb. And here, the story stops and introduces us in detail to the annual Israelite ritual of Passover.

On the night before Israel left Egypt, they sacrificed a young, spotless lamb and painted its blood on the door frame of their house. And when the divine plague came over Egypt, the houses covered with the blood of the lamb were passed over, and the son spared. And so every year since, the Israelites have reenacted that night to remember and to celebrate God's justice and his mercy.

But Pharaoh, because of his pride and rebellion, he loses his own son, and he's compelled to finally let the Israelites go free. And so the Israelite slaves make their exodus from Egypt. But no sooner did they leave than Pharaoh changes his mind, and he gathers his army and chases after the Israelites for a final showdown. As the Israelites pass through the waters of the sea safely, Pharaoh charges towards his own destruction.

Conclusion

05:22-06:33

The exodus story concludes with the first song of praise in the Bible. It's called the Song of the Sea, and the final line declares that the Lord reigns as king. And then the song retells in poetry what the story of God's Kingdom is all about.

It's about how God is on a mission to confront evil in his world and to redeem those who are enslaved to evil. God is going to bring his people into the promised land, where his divine presence will live among them. This story is what it looks like when God becomes King over his people.

So after the Israelites sing their song, the story takes a sharp turn. The Israelites, they're trekking through the wilderness on their way to Mount Sinai, and they're hungry, they're thirsty, and they start criticizing Moses and God for even rescuing them. They say they long for the good old days in Egypt. I mean, it's crazy. So God graciously provides food and water for Israel in the wilderness, but these stories, they cast a dark shadow. And we begin to wonder, could it be that Israel's heart is just as hard as Pharaoh's? We shall see. But for now that's the first half of the book of Exodus.