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ABIDE

DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



THE WAY OUT

EXODUS

Congratulations! You finally made it through Genesis! From this point, we're going to be moving a bit faster as far as content is concerned. This is not to say that the other books are not important, but there is a huge need to lay a solid foundation with Genesis so that the rest of the Old Testament might flow more fluidly from it.

Let's begin.

When you are reading through Exodus, the very first word that you read in the very first chapter, of the very first verse is the word, "Now".

The word "Now" is an indication to the reader that there is a continuation here that connects this book with the book of Genesis. However, by the time we reach Exodus, you need to have in your mind that 400 years have passed from Genesis 50 to Exodus 1. If you go back to Genesis 15:12-14 you'll read these words:

"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he [God] said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

And just as God had said, this did happen to His people. Joseph moves his family to the land of Goshen and they originally have the job of taking care of Pharaoh's cattle. But as the years came and went, and Pharaohs lived and fell, there came a time when this job task for Israel's children, became a free slave labor workforce for the Egyptian hierarchy. Somewhere along the way, the people moved from hired labor, to slave labor; and 400 years later, here we are.

However, even in the midst of this slavery, God was building a nation. This one family that had consisted of merely husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, cousins, nieces, and nephews had now grown to a population of about 2-3 million. Their population is actually what caused the drama given at the beginning of the book. The Egyptian leaders looked at the sheer numbers of the Israelites and were afraid of them. So in order to get this under control, they first tried to harden the labor, but they found that this only made the people stronger. Then, the leader tried a far more horrific tactic— population control by way of killing all of the newborn male children. This caused a groan to go up to God from His people, and God heard their cry. The time had now come for their rescue.

This is the dominant theme and purpose of the book— God redeems and rescues His people from their bondage in Egypt. This is actually what the word "Exodus" means— it means "The way out." God was going to give them the way out of the land of bondage (Egypt), by way of redemption, and take them to the land of promise (Canaan).

How to Think About Exodus

You might start reading the book of Exodus with a tremendous amount of excitement and enthusiasm. And why wouldn't you? It's easy to follow, it's exciting, and eventually, we get to see God's people cross the Red Sea. Who doesn't like to read about our God coming to the aid of His people? However, by the time you reach past chapter 15, things usually start to get a little confusing— and then, by the end, you're just completely confused.

But if you could think about the book of Exodus in three major sections, and then identify the purpose of those three sections, I think you'll have a much easier time reading and understanding this book. So let's talk about that for a moment.

The Exodus— Chapters 1-18: Historically speaking, the first major section you come to when reading Exodus, is chapters 1-18. It is here that we first see how incredible God's provision is for His people. Even though they had endured tragedy and hardship, God protected them and used this time to strengthen them as a people as well as giving them a sense of unity. After these 400 years, they were unified by a common family identity. Through their labor, they were physically and mentally strong and there is no doubt that they would be able to take on the hardships of the wilderness. What we're reading is that God really does bless Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's seed just as He had promised, and now they had a nation-sized population. By God's preservation, they were a family, but were now ready to be a nation.

Further, in these chapters are God's first lessons to these people about how they could trust in Him, rather than the false gods of the Egyptians. This section is a showdown between the false gods of Egypt, and the true God of Israel.

Lastly in this section, we're carried to the crossing of the Red Sea and into the wilderness journey. This is the actual "exodus" in the book of Exodus. God really does show them the way out.

The Law— Chapters 19-24: In this section, we have the giving of the law. Chapter 20 contains what is known as the "Decalog", or more widely known as the ten commandments. These commandments are the complete expression of our relationship to God and our fellow man. The first half has to do with our relationship to God, and the second half has to do with our relationship to our fellow man.

The Tabernacle— Chapters 25-40: This last division has to do with the construction of a building called the tabernacle. A full 16 chapters are given, detailing everything from how it was originally to be funded by offering, all the way to its dimensions, specific furniture, and who could serve in it.

What to Look for in Exodus

Just like every portion of the Bible, when we are given historical facts, it is not to be taken as an arbitrary accumulation of facts. That said, while we do find historical facts in Exodus, there are also real, tangible, spiritual significance all over this book; you just need to learn how to look for it.

Typology: For instance, there is typology. There are some obvious major characters, locations, and events in Exodus, but aside from their literal understandings, some of these things are a direct "type" in relating to spiritual significance. In other words, many of the people, locations, and events in Exodus are a "picture" of spiritual truth.

Moses: Moses is God's main character of the book. This is the man whom God uses to lead God's people out of bondage. Not only this, but you might be interested to know that Moses is mentioned 720 times in the Bible— more than any other Biblical character. So at this point, there is no question as to how important this character is. However, Moses is also used as a "Type," or a picture of, Christ. There are several evidences for this— here are a few:

- He is God's anointed.
- He leads God's people out of bondage.
- He acts as a mediator between God the Father and His people.

Pharaoh: When we see Pharaoh in this story he is a picture of Satan. He is pictured as trying to hinder the work of God and keep people in bondage.

Israel: Israel is a picture of sinners in need of redemption and rescue from God.

Egypt: Egypt is a picture of the 'land of the world'.

Canaan: This is a picture of the believer's life.

Theological Divisions: We spoke briefly about the historical divisions of the book, but you also need to be able to identify the corresponding theological divisions of the book.

God Saves His People From Sin (Exodus 1-12): So if we go back to the beginning of Exodus for a moment, and we know that Egypt is a picture of the "world" (A system of thought ruled by Satan), and if we know that Canaan (the Land of Promise) represents the believer's life, then we can easily conclude that since God saved Israel here, that in theological terms, God saves people from sin.

God Separates Us From Our Old Life (Exodus 13-18): As you noticed, God did not leave Israel in the land of Egypt; He brought them out in a mighty and powerful way. There was no question that once these people stepped foot on the other side of the Sea that their lives were going to be completely different. They were a free people, completely removed from bondage. They were removed from their old way of life: their labor, no doubt people that they knew, the language that they had grown used to, the places where they used to live. Everything that they had known, they were to leave behind. When God saves us, He does indeed separate us from our old life.

God Teaches Us to be Set Apart (19-40): Here we find the law and the Tabernacle. These were to dominate the life of the Israelites. The Tabernacle was placed directly in the center of the different tribes— and for good reason— God was to be at the center of their entire existence both as individuals, and as a nation. In the law, God taught what it meant to worship Him and what it meant to really respect each other. Further, the law taught that we can't worship God any way that we please. God set up a model of worship that was completely unique and unparalleled in the ancient world, and even today.

What to Gain from Exodus

What we first come to in the book of Exodus is a list of individual names along with the information that told us that these individuals came into this land with the individual people that made up their families. Now, don't miss this— it's important. The entire book of Exodus, once again, has to do with redemption. But what we learn here, and what God has always taught, is that redemption is done on an individual basis. It is between that individual and God. Redemption has to do with names because it is an individual responsibility. An individual does not obtain salvation because their parents believed in God; they obtain salvation through their personal faith in God— in His Word and in His work on their behalf. Obviously, on this side of the cross of Christ, we look back on the Words and Work of Christ— His substitutionary atonement on the cross, dying, and rising again on the third day. However, the point is, God has only one way of salvation; by faith.

Next, we move to the purpose of the law. The law was not given as a list of "do's and don'ts" simply to occupy our time. The law actually displays two things: The purity of God's character, and the depravity of man's character. God gave the law so that by the time it was done with us, there was no doubt as to how hopeless we are without God. That's exactly what Paul describes when we read in Galatians that the law was a "School Master" so that we would be brought to Christ. In other words, it shows us what we need to know about ourselves so that we would come before God in real repentance and real faith.

Finally, by the time we reach the 25th chapter in Exodus, we come to one of the most unusual and wonderful buildings that has ever been constructed. When you're reading through this section you'll find that it consisted of a certain arrangement of materials. You'll also find that it had three different sections: the outer court, the inner court, and the cube-shaped room

called the “Holy of Holies.” Reading further you’ll learn about the 7 pieces of furniture consisting of candles, brass alters, brass basins, and the Mercy Seat. In this section you will also notice that there was a specific way to set it up, to tear it down, and that depending on your ministry purpose, different areas of the tabernacle were restricted to only certain people (most notably of which was the Holy of Holies which was behind the veil— only the High Priest was allowed in this section once a year at the Day of Atonement).

You might also marvel in confusion at all of the other rules, provisions, ritual, clothing, and most importantly, the sacrifice that took place here as God’s people met to worship Him. You might read all of these things mentioned in this section and think “Why in the world is all of this in here?” Well, dear Christian, this Tabernacle was a picture showing the basis of our acceptance by God was by the mediation of blood shed for our sins, and how we actually approach God.

However, once we get into the New Testament, we run across a verse like **John 1:14**, “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” And then, we break open that phrase that Jesus “...dwelt among us...”, we find that this literally means that when Jesus came, He “Tabernacled” among us. In other words, everything that the Tabernacle was, was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and now, through the Holy Spirit, we are the Tabernacle.