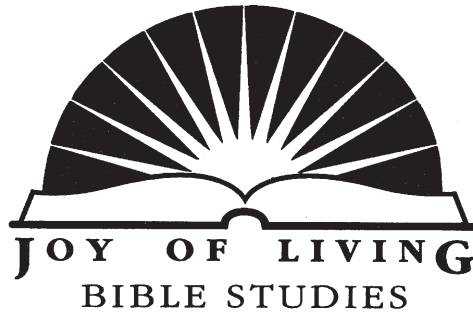


# Exodus

## Lesson 1



### Introduction to Exodus

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Every book in the Bible has a central theme. Some of the themes are more easily understood than others, and this is true of the first few books of the Old Testament.

All will agree that Genesis is the book of the beginnings—the beginning of mankind, the beginning of sin and man’s fall. Genesis tells us why and how much mankind needs God. Exodus shows how God dealt with man, through His chosen people—the Hebrews, also called the children of Israel—as He led them to redemption. Leviticus tells us what we must do after redemption: to learn to walk in obedience to God and to worship Him. Numbers records how God led the Israelites through the wilderness in their battles and trials.

Although these first four books of the Old Testament are books of history, their ultimate purpose is to reveal to us how we too began in sin (Genesis); that we must be redeemed (Exodus); that we must worship the Lord and follow His leading (Leviticus); and that we will always have battles and trials in our walk toward Christian maturity, but we have God’s power to help us as we go through these difficult experiences (Numbers).

### Contrasting Genesis and Exodus

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As we look more closely at Genesis, we see how God set apart certain individuals to accomplish His purpose. For example, God chose Shem from among the three sons of Noah to be the channel through which ultimately the Savior would come (see Luke 3:36). Abraham was singled out to be the father of the nation of Israel (see Genesis 12:1-3, in which he is called Abram). Joseph was chosen from all the twelve sons of Jacob to be an instrument in God’s hand for the preservation of his brothers (see Genesis 45).

Exodus, sometimes called “Israel’s Birthday Book,” takes up the story of the Israelites where Genesis leaves off. This fascinating historical account tells of God’s dealing with His chosen people, the Jews, when according to God’s promise they became a great nation. The people, who for many years had been favored guests of a Pharaoh, had become a nation of slaves. In Exodus we find the story of their deliverance from Egyptian slavery as they were led through the wilderness experience into the Promised Land. But that is not the whole story of Exodus. The grand theme of forgiveness of sins by the blood is revealed, and Exodus points to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, “the

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The great lesson God wants us to learn from Exodus is that He loves us and wants to free us from the power of sin and Satan (see John 3:16-17).

Let’s look at a series of vivid contrasts found in Genesis and Exodus.

#### Genesis:

- ☛ Records the history of Abraham’s family.
- ☛ The Hebrews were few in number.
- ☛ Hebrews welcomed into Egypt and granted great honor.
- ☛ Pharaoh acknowledges the God of Joseph.
- ☛ A Lamb is promised.
- ☛ Records Israel entering Egypt.
- ☛ Patriarchs are in land flowing with milk and honey.
- ☛ Ends with Joseph in a coffin in Egypt.

#### Exodus:

- ☛ Records the history of the nation Israel.
- ☛ The Hebrews increased to a great multitude.
- ☛ Hebrews feared and hated in Egypt.
- ☛ Pharaoh says, “I do not know the LORD” (Exodus 5:2).
- ☛ A lamb is slain.
- ☛ Records Israel departing Egypt.
- ☛ Patriarchs wandering in wilderness.
- ☛ Ends with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle.

### Exodus: The Redemption Book

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Exodus, the redemption book, traces the life of Moses—the Israelites’ redeemer. We will see how Moses’ experiences—the burning bush, the Passover lamb, the Red Sea crossing, the striking of the rock, the tabernacle—symbolize the glories of Christ, the Redeemer of all mankind. What a feast is before us! May the Holy Spirit Himself nourish us as we feed on His Word, that we may exclaim with Job, “I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread” (Job 23:12).

The “law of God” recorded in Exodus is still God’s unchanging moral standard for man’s behavior today—it has never been repealed. When a nation foolishly disregards God’s law and standard there is trouble, as we read in 2 Chronicles 36:16: “But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.” Today we see evidences all about us of the results of disobedience and utter disregard for the principles God has given in His Word.

When people choose to obey God’s laws, their testimony is expressed in the words of the psalmist: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes” (Psalm 19:7-8).

Just as God required of Israel, we also must obey the moral laws God gave us, but we do not have to do it alone. Elizabeth Elliot once said, “Throughout the Bible...when God asks a man to do something, methods, means, materials and specifics were always provided. The man had one thing to do: obey.” This is true for any Christian in every age! When God calls us to be His people, He provides all that we need by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:32; 1 Corinthians 2:4).

## The Tabernacle

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There is an interesting contrast in Genesis and Exodus. Just two chapters in Genesis are sufficient to record God’s work of creation, while ten chapters of Exodus are devoted to the tabernacle—instructions for its construction and its furnishing. Why was the tabernacle so important to God that the Holy Spirit gave very detailed description for its building?

The tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was always to be located in the center of Israel’s camp and represented God’s dwelling place among His people. Here God met with man (see Exodus 25:21-22; 30:6; Leviticus 1:1). The tabernacle was the place of worship and of sacrifice. Although it was rather unimpressive on the outside, we shall discover that inside “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34).

When Christ came to earth it would not be splendor, majesty or grandeur that would allure the world. His background and physical appearance were rather unimpressive. He was born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth with His mother Mary and His stepfather Joseph, a mere carpenter. Outwardly there may have been little to attract the spiritually blinded, because when the Lord Jesus walked this earth He was humble, not seeking pomp, glory or praise of man. Yet within Him was holiness, goodness and wisdom (see Luke 2:40). To those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, He is the “fairest of ten thousand.” Christ, our “perfect tabernacle” (Hebrews 9:11), must be in the center of our lives.

The Israelites who wanted to come near to God had to come to the door of the tabernacle, plain though it was. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “I am the door” (John 10:7, NASB), and He has invited us to draw near to Him and to receive forgiveness and eternal life. The apostle Peter said, “Salvation is found in no one else [no one other than Jesus Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Have you drawn near to Christ?

## Moses, The Author

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As with the other four books in the Pentateuch (the Greek name for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible), God led Moses to write Exodus. The Scriptures themselves teach that Moses recorded what God revealed to him. In Nehemiah 9:14 we read, “You...gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses.” Numbers 33:2 says that “At the LORD’s command Moses recorded the stages in their journey.”

Although we cannot be certain of the dates of the events of Exodus, it is generally accepted that the beginning of the oppression of the Israelites was about 1550 B.C. Moses is the principal character, and really the hero of the book.

The story of Exodus begins in ancient Egypt, whose history and culture we have become familiar with because of the enormous amount of publicity about the treasures from King or Pharaoh Tutankhamen’s tomb. Ancient Egypt was a highly developed civilization even before Moses’ time. Papyri have been unearthed that show the Egyptians’ knowledge of mathematics, medicine and astronomy. Pyramids, sphinxes, and tombs are a display of their architectural genius. Works of art beaten from copper, beautifully carved furniture, tools, jewelry, and glazed pottery all reveal the skills of the ancient Egyptians. Probably one of the most fascinating of their skills was the embalming and preserving of bodies, which can be observed in the display of “King Tut’s” well-preserved mummy.

## Why Were the Israelites in Egypt?

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In Genesis we find the account of Abraham, God’s faithful servant, and his descendants. God’s plan of redemption begins to unfold in His promise to make of Abraham a great nation. We see the careful preservation of a line through which the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be born, occupying a prominent place in these early chapters of the Bible. While God dealt primarily with the family unit in the book of Genesis, it is thrilling in the book of Exodus to see His matchless grace and infinite patience in leading an entire nation of people, who many times were rebellious and unyielding.

The closing chapters of Genesis give us an explanation for the presence of the children of Israel in Egypt. In response to God’s call, Abraham had moved his family to Canaan, the land God promised to him and his descendants. Eventually, Abraham’s grandson, Jacob—later called Israel—became the father of twelve sons, one of whom was Joseph. Jacob’s sons had different mothers. Rachel, whom Jacob loved very much, was the mother of Joseph and his younger brother

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1. From the hymn, “The Lily of the Valley,” words by Charles W. Fry (1881).

Benjamin. We read that Jacob especially loved Joseph, and he made a beautiful coat for the 17-year-old young man. This only added fuel to the fire of hatred that already burned within the hearts of Joseph's half-brothers. Their jealousy was so great, they wanted to get rid of Joseph. They sold him to Midianite traders, who in turn sold him to Potiphar, an officer in Pharaoh's court in Egypt.

Far from home and family, Joseph was a slave in Egypt among those who did not know the true God. But the Lord protected and cared for His own, and Joseph became prosperous in his master's house. We read, "the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph" (Genesis 39:5). May we Christians be so dedicated and faithful in sharing the love of Christ, that the lives of others will be enriched by our very presence!

Joseph's faith and trust in God continued despite great difficulties. After many years, including an undeserved imprisonment, God used Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream, predicting seven years of good crops followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh was so impressed with what he realized was Joseph's God-given wisdom, that he made Joseph ruler over all of Egypt (see Genesis 41:38-40).

When the famine was at its peak, the lands surrounding Egypt were also without food, and Joseph's half-brothers came to Egypt from Canaan to buy grain. Although they did not recognize him, Joseph knew them immediately. The exciting series of events that led to the migration of Jacob and all his family—70 people—from the land of Canaan to Egypt is recorded in Genesis 42-46.

Joseph had won the respect and admiration of Pharaoh, who could not do enough to express his gratitude for Joseph's management of the kingdom affairs. Pharaoh showed great favor to Joseph's father and brothers by permitting them with their families to settle in a region of Egypt called Goshen, near the Nile River, a veritable paradise for shepherds and their flocks. The children of Israel prospered in the land of Goshen; they grew in numbers as well as possessions.

God had permitted Joseph to be sold into Egypt by his envious brothers in order that they might not die because of famine. But God's purposes reach farther than simply providing for physical needs, and so we see His hand in keeping His people away from the corrupting influences of the people of Canaan, while He prepared them for their mission. The Canaanites comprised eleven nations and were descendants of Ham, one of Noah's sons. These Canaanite nations did not worship the God of Abraham. They had degenerated to gross wickedness, even sacrificing their children to idols. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates the debauchery in which they engaged (see Genesis 19).

Joseph's beautiful, forgiving spirit is portrayed in the closing verses of Genesis. His brothers feared that Joseph's generous attitude toward them would change to hatred after their father Jacob's death. But there wasn't even a hint of revenge, or the least thought of withholding from them any of the favors they had enjoyed as guests in Egypt, their adopted land. Joseph told his brothers that though they thought to do evil against him, God meant it for good (see Genesis 50:20). The book of Genesis ends with Joseph assuring his brothers

that God would bring them to the land of Canaan, which had been promised to Abraham. They were preserved to become His witnesses on the earth; and from this chosen people was to come the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## God's Message to Us

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The lessons in this study provide an opportunity for daily reading and study of the Bible, the Book of books. The Bible is God's Word, and He speaks through its pages to us. The Holy Spirit so perfectly guided and used people of God to pen the words, that it is a treasure adapted to the personal needs of each individual. God's infallible Book has a very special message just for you. Won't you decide now that you will set aside a time each day to study and answer the questions? For most of us, not a mealtime goes by but that we enjoy some food for our physical bodies. God's Word is spiritual food. Feast on it daily—it will enrich your soul and bring immeasurable blessing to your life. May your experience match that of the prophet who said, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jeremiah 15:16).



5. Read Genesis 47:5-6. Where in Egypt did the Israelites settle? Find this area on the map on page 209.

6. a. What happened to the Israelites over time after they moved to Egypt? (Exodus 1:6-7)

b. How do the following verses show that this fulfilled God's promises?

Genesis 15:5 (God is speaking to Abram, who was later called Abraham.)

Genesis 46:3 (God is speaking to Jacob, Abraham's grandson.)

### **Third Day: Review Exodus 1, concentrating on verses 8-14.**

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1. What change in administration had taken place in Egypt? (Exodus 1:8)

2. What was this king afraid of? (Exodus 1:9-10)

3. What steps did he take to deal with the problem? (Exodus 1:11)

4. Did this accomplish the king's purpose? (Exodus 1:12a)

5. How did the Egyptians respond? (Exodus 1:12b-14)

6. a. Times of severe trial have often proved to be seasons of greatest blessing to Christians, because in these situations we cast ourselves upon God, and are drawn close to Him. What does Psalm 119:67 tell us?

- b. Personal: Are you experiencing some trial, illness, or persecution? The Lord Jesus Christ offers to bear all your burdens—beginning with your burden of sin. Perhaps you do not know the joy of walking with the Lord, trusting Him alone for your strength. Read God's promises in Psalm 55:22 and Matthew 11:28. Won't you pray now and commit your burden to Him?

### **Fourth Day: Review Exodus 1, concentrating on verses 15-22.**

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1. What evil plan did the king devise to hinder the growth of the Israelite nation? (Exodus 1:15-16)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Did the midwives obey the king? Why did they do this? (Exodus 1:17)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. a. What was the result of the midwives' obedience to God? (Exodus 1:20)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How did God personally reward the midwives? (Exodus 1:21)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What new command did Pharaoh issue to deal with his fear of the Israelites? (Exodus 1:22)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Challenge: The Bible records the actions of many people who obeyed God rather than the commands of men. What do you learn about some of these people in the following verses? Summarize briefly.

Esther 3:2-6

Daniel 6:10-13

Acts 5:27-29

6. Personal: Have you ever been asked—or ordered—to do something that you knew would be dishonoring to God? Did you comply with the request, or choose to obey God rather than people? Perhaps you would like to share with your group.

### **Fifth Day: Read Exodus 2, concentrating on verses 1-10.**

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1. How did one Israelite family respond to the pharaoh's evil command? (Exodus 2:1-4)
2. What happened to the child? (Exodus 2:5-6)
3. How did God provide a way for the child to return to his Israelite family for a time? (Exodus 2:7-10a)
4. Who was the child? (Exodus 2:10b)
5. Challenge: Read Hebrews 11:23. How were Moses' parents able to disobey Pharaoh's command? How do you think they trained Moses during the limited time he lived with them?
6. Personal: What are some ways that you can help your children, grandchildren, or other children in your area to know God? Pray and ask God to guide you and empower you in this important area.

### **Sixth Day: Review Exodus 2, concentrating on verses 11-25.**

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1. Although Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter, educated and trained as an Egyptian, what people does he identify with as a grown man? (Exodus 2:11a)
2. What actions did Moses take because of his concern for his people? (Exodus 2:11b-13)

3. a. How did the Hebrew men respond to Moses' attempted peacemaking? (Exodus 2:14a)  
  
b. How did Moses respond to this rebuke? (Exodus 2:14b)  
  
c. How does Acts 7:25 help us understand Moses' motive, even if the action he took was wrong?
  
4. a. Why did Moses run away, and where did he go? (Exodus 2:15) Find this place on the map on page 209.  
  
b. Who came to the well where Moses was sitting, and what did Moses do? (Exodus 2:16-17) What does his response tell you about Moses' character?  
  
c. Summarize what now took place in Moses' life. (Exodus 2:18-22)
  
5. What was the situation of the Israelites during this time? What did they do and how did God respond? (Exodus 2:23-25)
  
6. Personal: God is faithful, and He does not forget His people. Even when we are in the midst of difficulties and problems, He wants us to trust Him to bring us through safely to the other side. What problems are you facing? Read Psalm 23:4, Romans 8:31, and 1 Corinthians 10:13. How do these promises encourage you to depend on Him?