



Twelve Stages in the Bible - Exodus

Exodus 1-17

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1. The Importance of the Exodus

2. The Story of the Exodus

We are currently in a series entitled "12 Stages in the Bible." In it, we are surveying the twelve major historical periods in the Bible. My aim in giving these 12 messages is to help you see the overall storyline of the Bible. And in seeing the whole, I trust that it will help you when you look at the pieces. [\[1\]](#)

We started off by looking at the creation account from Genesis 1-11. We looked at the creation itself, the fall of man, the flooding of the world, and the tower of Babel. Next, we looked at the patriarchs from Genesis 12-50. We looked at the four main patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. This morning, we will focus our attention upon the account of the Exodus, that is the account of how the Hebrew people were brought out of Egypt and into the precipice of the promised land.

This morning, we are going to look at how God heard the cry of the Hebrew people in their affliction. We are going to see how God came to Moses as the one who would deliver Israel from their slavery. We are going to see how God used some miraculous means to bring them out of Egypt and into the precipice of the promised land.

So far, as we have looked at the creation and the patriarchs, I have used the same outline in each of my messages. In the first portion of my message, I have focused upon the importance of these events, mostly by looking at the sheer number of times that this event is referenced in the rest of the Bible (apart from the actual account itself). Then, in my second point, I have told the story of these events, watching them unfold in Biblical history. So, we looked at (1) the importance of creation; and (2) the story of creation. We looked at (1) the importance of the patriarchs; and (2) the story of the patriarchs. And again, I'm going to use the same outline (because it works well for our texts). We will look at (1) the importance of the Exodus; and (2) the story of the Exodus. Let's consider my first point, ...

1. The Importance of the Exodus

The reason why the creation is important is because of how many times the Scriptures refer to the creation account, beyond the book of Genesis. The reason why the patriarchs are important is because of how many times the Scriptures refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, beyond the book of Genesis. With the Exodus, it is no different. The reason why the account of the Exodus is so important is because of how many times the Scriptures refer to the Exodus, beyond the actual account of the Exodus.

I counted up this week the number of times outside of the Pentateuch that the Old Testament Scriptures refer to what God did during the Exodus account. I counted about a hundred times. To put this in perspective, imagine yourself reading through the Bible in a year, taking about the same number of pages each day. You would get through the Pentateuch in about 2 months. It would take you about another seven months to work through the rest of the Old Testament. During that seven month period of time, you would be reminded of what took place in the Exodus, on the average, about every other day.

Every other day, you would heard about how the people of Israel were in Egypt in bondage in slavery, and how the Lord was gracious and redeemed them from their slavery. However, after God's might deliverance, we see Israel rebelling against the Lord by complaining and being disobedient. As you read through the Scriptures, you would read about the work of the sovereign God in delivering His people. But, you would also read about the way in which Israel rebelled. You would read, "Israel, remember your mighty God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. He is mighty and powerful to save." You would also read, "Israel, remember how you rebelled after seeing the great signs and wonders which the LORD your God performed for you while in Egypt." On the average, every other day, you would be reminded of these events.

In the book of Joshua, you would read of God's promise to Joshua, ... "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). Not even Pharaoh, the ruler of the strongest nation on earth, could stand before Moses, because God was with him. So also will Joshua be able accomplish all that the LORD calls him to do. Later in Joshua, you would read about the spies entering into Jericho to find its weaknesses, so as to conquer the sinful city. Rahab the harlot would tell them, "we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed" (Joshua 2:10). As a result, she sought safety.

In the book of Judges, you would hear of God's promise coming to those in Israel, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ' I will never break My covenant with you.'" (Judges 2:1). Later in the book of Judges, you

would hear God chastising His people, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians? ... Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods" (Judges 10:11, 13).

You would hear Samuel bring up the Exodus when he installed Saul as king in Israel, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers" (1 Sam. 12:6-7).

When you come to 2 Samuel, you would read of the Exodus again. When David wanted to build a temple, the LORD said to David, "I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day;" (2 Sam. 7:6).

In Solomon's prayer to dedicate the temple, you would hear him mention the Exodus four times in his prayer (1 Kings 8:16, 21, 51, 53).

Furthermore, as you read through the Psalms, you would hear many references to the Exodus. For example, ...

Psalm 77:20, "You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Psalm 103:7, "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel."

Psalm 105:26-27, "He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. They performed His wondrous acts among them, and miracles in the land of Ham."

Psalm 81:10, "I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

In Psalm 78, we read about how, He wrought wonders before their fathers in the land of Egypt (verse 12), He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, (verse 13) and He made the waters stand up like a heap, (verse 13).

In Psalm 136, we read about Him,

- ... who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn, (verse 10)
- ... and brought Israel out from their midst, (verse 11)
- ... with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, (verse 12)
- ... to Him who divided the Red Sea asunder, (verse 13)
- ... And made Israel pass through the midst of it, (verse 14)
- ... But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, (verse 15).

All of the major prophets referred to the Exodus. Isaiah referred to that event, talking of the "glorious arm" of the Lord (Is. 63:12). Jeremiah spoke of the Exodus often. Ezekiel speaks of the Exodus as well (Ezek. 20:5-7). Daniel (9:15) and Hosea (11:1) and Amos (2:10) and Micah (6:4) and Haggai (2:5) all speak of this event.

The New Testament is no exception. There are many references to Moses and all that he did throughout the New Testament. The account of the Exodus consumes several chapters of the New Testament: Acts 7; 1 Corinthians 10; Hebrews 3 and 4. During the days of the New Testament, Moses was such a hero to the people of Israel, that a sect, named the Sadducees arose who followed nothing but the writings of Moses.

The account of the Exodus is important if you would understand the story of the Bible. Our God is a delivering God. Our God is a saving God. He hears those who cry to Him. He saves those who repent of their sins. This is the story of the Exodus. And what God does here in Exodus, he does throughout all of the Bible. God is a saving God to those who repent of their sins and cry to the LORD for help.

So important was this fact for the people of Israel, that God instituted a feast to commemorate the occasion. It's called the Passover. For 3,400 years, the Jewish people have celebrated the Passover in remembrance of all that God did in delivering His people from slavery in Egypt. Jews from all over the world gather with their families and remember how Israel was in bondage, and how God saved them. They remember each of the plagues, and how God brought them safely through the Red Sea. Everything at the meal is symbolic and points toward their hope of redemption in the future. It all points to Jesus.

It was at the Passover meal that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. For 1,400 years, the Jews had thought of how God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. And at that meal, Jesus Christ told His disciples to remember how Jesus will deliver them from their sin.

That's (1) The Importance of the Exodus. Now, let's turn our attention upon my second point, ...

2. The Story of the Exodus

Please turn in your Bibles to Exodus, chapter 1. This chapter begins where the book of Genesis left off. The book of Genesis left off with the descendants of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the land of Egypt. They had come there, because there was a famine in the promised land, but the land of Egypt had plenty. In the sovereignty of God, Joseph, the brother who had been sold into slavery, was in charge of the famine relief. Through his political clout, he was able to bring his relatives into the land of Goshen, where they dwelt as shepherds (Genesis 47).

God was with the people of Israel. According to Exodus 1:7, we read, "The sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them." This caused alarm for the Egyptians, who were frightened at the up and coming minority. The king of Egypt said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let

us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us and fight against us and depart from the land" (Exodus 1:9-10). We see a foreshadowing of what is to come.

And so, they enslaved the people of Israel in Egypt in an effort to subdue them. But, this didn't work, as they multiplied all the more to such an extent that the Egyptians "were in dread of the sons of Israel" (Exodus 1:12). The next plan to subdue the people was to kill the boys as they were born (verse 16).

It was in this context that Moses, the great deliverer, the focus of our story, was born. You probably know the story. His mother and father saw that he was a beautiful child (2:2). And so, they hid him for three months (2:2). When he was no longer able to be hidden, they placed Moses in a wicker basket covered with tar pitch and placed him "among the reeds by the bank of the Nile" (2:3). As Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe, she saw the baby among the reeds (2:5) and quickly discerned that it was a Hebrew child (2:6). Pharaoh's daughter had pity upon this baby (2:6), and raised him as her own (2:10). She even named him "Moses," which comes from the Hebrew word meaning, "to pull out or to draw out" because she said, "I drew him out of the water" (2:10).

Now, as Moses grew up, He was aware that he was adopted. He was aware that he came from the Hebrew people. And he was aware that His people were oppressed by the Egyptians. As the writer to the Hebrews tells us, "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:24-25).

Later in chapter 2, we see the passion of Moses for his people, "Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." Obviously, this isn't a commendable thing that Moses did. He was a murderer. For this murder, he had to escape to Midian at the age of 40. But, this story here does illustrate how Moses had a passion for his people. He didn't sell out to the Egyptians, though he could have lived the easy life in Egypt. Instead, he chose to identify himself with his people. And it was Moses through whom the Lord would deliver His people from slavery.

The story of the Exodus begins at the end of chapter 2, ...

Exodus 2:23-25

Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.

Surely, across the world, there were other people groups oppressed in slavery who cried out to their gods for deliverance to whom God turned a deaf ear. But, God wasn't deaf toward His people. Why? Because God had made a covenant with Abraham (in Genesis 12:1-2), which he continued to verify to Isaac (in Genesis 26:24) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:12-15). The covenant made with Abraham was made somewhere around 2,000 B. C. The Exodus took place around 1,400 B. C. (These are good dates to memorize.) This means that God remembered his covenant for 600 years after the original promise that He made to Abraham. What a great picture this is of the faithfulness of God.

Moses was the man through whom God would use to deliver His people from slavery. After 40 years in Midian, God appears to Moses in chapter 3. This chapter sets up the entire Exodus narrative, so we'll spend a bit of time here, considering the entire chapter. So, let's begin reading in verse 1, ...

Exodus 3:1-3

Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

In forty years as a shepherd, Moses had seen plenty of bushes burning. But, this bush was unique. It was burning, but it wasn't being consumed. Pretty quickly, he found out that it wasn't merely a natural phenomenon. Rather, it was a supernatural phenomenon. God was getting his attention. Then, we read, ...

Exodus 3:4-6

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

When God appears to Moses, He appears as an awesome God. He appears to him as a holy God. He speaks from the bush and tells Moses to remove his sandals. Apparently, the ground was holy because God was in his presence. Moses was so aware of God's holiness that he "hid his face" from God. Such is the presence of God. You can't approach Him casually. You need to approach him with the utmost care and purity.

At this point I also want to point out to you the importance of the patriarchs. Hundreds of years after their deaths, God still is identifying himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In referring to these men, God is referring to the covenant that He made with them. He is still going to remain faithful to His covenant. In verses 7-9, God explains to Moses why He appeared to him.

Exodus 3:7-9

I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

God saw the affliction of His people (verse 7). God heard their cry (verse 9). And now, verse 8, He has "come down to deliver them." Indeed, this is the motif of Exodus. He will lead them back into the promised land. If you remember the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you will remember that he promised to them a land. Here God says that he is going to bring them into the land. And then comes the part where Moses will be involved.

Exodus 3:10

Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.

Moses is going to be the deliverer. He will go to Pharaoh and will bring the people out of Egypt. But, such a task was daunting for Moses. He has his doubts. In verse 11 we read that ...

Exodus 3:11-12

Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

Moses' doubts continue in the next verse, ...

Exodus 3:13

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

This is the first of several objections that Moses has before the LORD. Throughout chapters 3 and 4, Moses complains to the Lord, showing his reluctance to go and do what God told him to do. While Isaiah may have said, "Here am I, send me" (Is. 6:8), Moses said, "Here am I, send someone else." And so, it wasn't merely Moses who went before Pharaoh. Aaron also joined him for moral support. Such reluctance on Moses' part works to show that the Exodus was all God's doing. See, it wasn't the idea of Moses to go to Pharaoh and request that the Hebrew people be permitted to leave. It all shows that God is the one who accomplished this miracle Exodus.

Anyway, this objection here in verse 13 is really quite humorous if you think about it. In fact, it's quite hilarious. Moses is envisioning the scenario of traveling to Egypt, bursting back on the scene after a 40 year absence and then proclaiming to the Jews that "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." For four hundred years they had heard nothing from God. And now, Moses claims that God spoke to him? Then, Moses puts forth this imagined scenario, which we can often do when we are afraid. He imagines that the people of Israel put him to the test, saying, "What is His name?" And Moses realizes that he doesn't quite have an answer for them. He thinks that he would appear a bit foolish before all of the people. And indeed, he would, wouldn't he? "I have a message from the president!" "Oh? What is his name?" "Errrrr.... I don't really know." That's what Moses is envisioning.

God's answer to Moses is one of the most significant passages in all of the Old Testament. In it, God reveals himself to Moses (and through the Scriptures to us) as to the core of His being. God said to Moses, ...

Exodus 3:14

"I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

This is one of the key verses in all of the Bible. It reveals God's name to us. God's name is "I AM," which is related to the word, "Yahweh." Whenever your Bible mentions, "The LORD," with all capital letters, this is the Hebrew word behind it, "Yahweh," ... "I am." That's God's name. He is the God of being. [2](#)Continuing on in verse 15, we see God's plan, ...

Exodus 3:15-30

God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you ' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.'" So I said, 'I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you

go.

These words here are a summary of the book of Exodus. God has appeared to Moses because He made a covenant with the patriarchs (verse 15). Moses is to go to Israel and unite them of God's appearance and desire to set the people free from slavery. However, in going to Pharaoh, he will not let the people go. This will be an opportunity for God to perform His miracles in the land of Egypt, which ultimately will be the means through which Israel will be let go.

Anyway, the plan is that Moses is to travel back to Egypt (mind you, as this time, he is still in Midian). He is to go and gather the people of Israel and unite them to request that they leave Egypt to worship the LORD. But, God knows that Pharaoh will not let them go, "except under compulsion." The hardness of Pharaoh's heart will be the very means by which God will be able to perform many miracles in Egypt. When the miracles are completed, Pharaoh will let them go.

Later in chapter 4, we see the situation explained a bit more, "The LORD said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.'" There are some who say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, only after Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Have you heard this? I know why people say such things. They are trying to make sense of God hardening Pharaoh's heart. Surely, they think, it would be unjust of God to harden Pharaoh's heart without his choice in the matter. Surely, they think, God would only harden Pharaoh's heart after Pharaoh hardened his heart first, right?

I sympathize with those who reason this way. However, it's difficult to reconcile with this text. Think about it. Moses is in Midian. He hasn't yet spoken with the Israelites to tell them of Operation Freedom. He hasn't yet spoken with Pharaoh about what their plans are. And God says that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will not let the people go. Now, you tell me, who's first in this matter? Is God merely responding to Pharaoh? Or is God demonstrating His sovereignty over Pharaoh's heart to insure that His miracles would take place? I think that it's clear that God is the one initiating the work. In fact, this is the point of ...

Romans 9:16-18

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or on the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." [Ex. 9:16]. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

God dealt with Pharaoh in such a way as to insure that God would be able to make his power known. Think about it. What if Pharaoh's heart wasn't hard? Then, Israel would merely be let go. And the result? God wouldn't have had the opportunity to show forth His power like He did. But, that was the purpose for Pharaoh in God's plan of redemption.

God's purpose is mentioned several times throughout the account of the plagues. In chapter 7, we see Moses and Aaron coming into Pharaoh's presence. God said, "You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:2-3).

Sure enough, after Moses and Aaron speak to Pharaoh, we see God observing (as He did in verse 14), "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go." And then, the plagues begin.

The usual pattern goes like this. First, Moses and Aaron come into Pharaoh's presence. They request permission to leave. Pharaoh refuses to let them go. So, Moses and Aaron tell him of the plague that will come upon them. They leave and the plague comes upon them. When Pharaoh has had enough, he calls Moses and Aaron back into his presence to talk with them. He pleads that the plague would stop, promising to let the Hebrew people to go. However, once the plague stops, Pharaoh hardens his heart and refuses to let the people go. And so, the pattern repeats again. ... Ten times this takes place.

It begins in chapter 7 with the **water in the Nile** being turned into blood. This was especially disastrous for the Egyptians, who relied on the Nile for their life. In chapter 8, we see several more plagues. We see **frogs**. There were frogs everywhere. They were in houses, in bedrooms, in beds, in ovens, and in kneading bowls. Then came the **gnats**, little insects all over man and beasts. Bug spray wasn't yet invented, so all would have been bothered by these little creatures. Then came the **swarms of flies**. They were swarming all over everyone, in their houses, all over the land, eating the crops in the field.

What I love about the plagues is that there are times in which God is very careful to distinguish between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. For instance, it says in verse 22 that the flies wouldn't come upon the land of Goshen where the Israelites were living. "On that day I will set apart the land of Goshen where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land."

In chapter 9, there are three more plagues. There was the **pestilence on the livestock** in which horses and donkeys and camels, were all found dead. But, according to verse 4, God said that he would "Make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel," and that's exactly what happened. Then came the **boils**, painful skin lesions all over their bodies. It was so bad that the Egyptians couldn't even stand before Moses the pain was too great. (Note that Paul quotes verse 16 regarding God's freedom over the hearts of men). Following this came the plague of **hail**. Ice balls from heaven came and destroyed the trees and the crops throughout the entire land of Egypt. Never before had the Egyptians faced a hailstorm as severe as this storm. But, the amazing thing is that nothing was destroyed in Goshen, where the Israelites lived.

In chapter 10, we have two more plagues. Before we look at them, let's consider the first two verses of the chapter, which give us a good picture of God's purposes in these plagues. After all, God could easily have softened Pharaoh's heart so that he would let the people of Israel go. After all, "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever he wishes" (Proverbs 21:1). But God wanted to show His power. God wanted to make His glory known. And so, we read, ...

Exodus 10:1-2

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

In other words, God toyed with the Egyptians (the greatest superpower of the world at that time) so that the fame of His name would spread throughout all generations of Israelites, as fathers would tell their children and grandchildren of the great deeds of the LORD.

Two more plagues are recorded for us in chapter 10. First, we see the **locusts**. They were so numerous that no one was able to see the land (verse 5) and they ate everything that was left from the hail, bringing great devastation to the land. Things were so bad that even Pharaoh's servants were pleading that he would let the Israelites go. They reasoned, "Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" (10:7). But, as Pharaoh's heart was still hard, God brought the plague of **darkness**. For three days, darkness was upon the land of Egypt. For three days, the people of Egypt stayed home. But, somehow, "the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings" (10:23). They conducted life as usual.

Finally, we see the plague that pushed Pharaoh over the top. It was the plague of the death of the firstborn. God told Moses that this would be the last plague, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here" (Ex. 11:1). The idea of the plague was simple. The plague is told in verse 4, ...

Exodus 11:4-7

Thus says the LORD, "About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well. Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel."

The difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians is the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the doorposts of their homes, which is described in chapter 12. So significant is this event that the Jewish calendar started in the month of this plague, "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you" (12:2). On the 10th day of the month, the Israelites were to take a lamb into their house. On the 14th day of the month, they were to kill the lamb when the sun goes down. They were to take the blood and put it on the doorposts and on the lintel of their homes. The glory of this plague is shown in these words, "The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:13).

What was prophesied took place.

Exodus 12:29-32

Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."

And so, they went out! God led them out of slavery. Thus, the story of the Exodus was completed. However, the story isn't over. What takes place after this has much to teach us.

You would think that such a display of God's awesome power would have caused the people to fall down in worship of the Lord, following Him wherever He would lead. But, such was not the case. Rather, the people rebelled against the Lord. God brings them out of the promised land and all is well, until they look behind them. Pharaoh had changed his mind and had followed after the Israelites. In actuality, it was God who hardened his heart (Ex. 14:4). Anyway, Pharaoh finally caught them at the Red Sea. The story of their encounter is told in chapter 14,

Exodus 14:10-12

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

After seeing what they saw (plagues coming exactly as Moses said they would come, plagues ceasing exactly when Moses said that they would stop, distinguishing precisely between the Egyptians and the Israelites) you would think that they would turn to Moses and say, "Moses, what's next? God has brought us this far, what's He going to do next?" But, such is the human heart. Though it experiences the

power of God in the past, it fails to believe that God will do the same thing in the future. Well, God provides a way of escape that further glorifies Himself (just as He had done in the Exodus and just as He does in the cross of Christ today).

Exodus 14:13-18

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.

And so, He split the Red Sea. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned" (Heb. 11:29).

Chapter 15 includes a great song of rejoicing. It was a song of victory! And then, they turned into the wilderness of Shur and went three days without water (verse 22).

Finally, they came to Marah, but "they could not drink the waters of marah, for they were bitter" (verse 23). Again, the people were being put to the test.

Now, you would have thought that the people of Israel would have learned to trust the LORD. Not only did they see the plagues, but they also saw the Red Sea consume their enemies. You would think that the Israelites would have cried out to Moses, "Moses, God has brought us out of the land of Egypt by with His mighty hand. Surely he has a plan for us. You can see the distress that we are in now. Could you please plead to the LORD for us, that we might know the deliverance that He will provide?" But, such was not the case.

Rather than believing that the LORD would continue in His faithfulness, providing water for them, they grumbled at Moses saying, "What shall we drink?" (verse 24). The Lord showed Moses a tree, which he threw into the waters, and the waters became sweet (verse 25). And so, the people drank and were satisfied.

A bit later, they again found themselves in another troublesome situation. In chapter 16, we read about how they were in the wilderness without food. Rather than turning to Moses and saying, "Moses, in case you haven't noticed, we have run out of food. God has provided for us abundantly in the past. Surely, he will do it again. Moses, will you tell us what's going to take place?" instead, they grumbled against Moses and Aaron and said, "Would that we had died by the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (16:4).

In His grace, God provided for them a "fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground" (verse 14). When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" (Exodus 16:15), which in Hebrew is "Man hu." And that was its name. It was called "Manna." For 40 years, God provided them with Manna, enough to feed everyone every day, with double the amount coming on Friday, so that they wouldn't have to work on the Sabbath. Though the people of Israel witnessed a miracle every morning, they continued in their rebellious ways.

Another complaint comes in chapter 17. This time, when they camped at Rephidim, "there was no water for the people to drink" (17:1). So, "the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water that we may drink.' (17:2). Rather than believing the LORD, that He would supply all of their needs, they rebelled. But, God came through for them. He provided for them water out of the rock.

Here's the lesson for us this morning: though we experience the power of God first-hand, our hearts may still be hard. Signs and wonders aren't sufficient to insure faith in our souls. Jesus said that even the greatest of miracles (someone rising from the dead) isn't sufficient to generate faith in faithless people (Luke 16:31).

I close with a simple way in which this story brings us to reflect upon Jesus. Paul wrote, ...

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Your boasting is not good Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

With these words, Paul points out that Jesus is the great Passover lamb that has been sacrificed for our sins. Just as the Israelites sacrificed their lambs to save their families, so also has Jesus been our Passover lamb that saves us. Rather than applying the blood to the doorposts of our houses, we merely need to believe in Jesus.

Then, let us not live like the Israelites lived, doubting and in rebellion. Rather, let us live in faith and in obedience.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 14, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] These stages are from the book, *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, by Max Anders. It's an excellent book to help you grasp the main storyline of the Bible.

[2] This is one of the things that makes the "I am" statements of Jesus so significant. In John's gospel, Jesus refers to Himself as "I am" on seven different occasions. They all have a subtle reference back to Exodus 3:14, and God's self-disclosure of His name.