Bible in Five: Exodus, Part 1
by Tim Mackie at Blackhawk Church, Wisconsin

Alright, now you are moving into the book of Exodus. So you remember the book of Genesis ended with Abraham’s family, the family of Israel, in Egypt. And they were doing fine there, but the book of Exodus kind of begins the story. Remember the reason why we care about this family is because the blessing and salvation of all nations hangs off what God is going to do with this family.

So the story begins with Abraham’s family still in Egypt but then there’s a new king called Pharaoh. The new king of Egypt comes up and he doesn’t know anything about Joseph or Abraham’s family and he begins to slowly enslave and really enact genocide of the Israelite people through slavery and forced labor and so on.

So the story of Exodus begins and we are on the edge of our seats biting our fingernails like “Wait, I thought these were the promised people. God’s working out His salvation, but Pharaoh is going to completely wipe these people out. What’s going to happen? How’s God going to respond?” That’s what the book of Exodus is about.

Here at chapter three, one of the first key chapters, is where we’re introduced to the hero of the next four books of the Bible, a figure named Moses. Moses is called by God, this is the famous ‘burning bush’ story, and he says “You are going to be the one who is going to confront Pharaoh and tell him to release my people and to set them free.” So chapters 4-15 is the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt.

There are some key themes going on here that the author’s exploring. One key theme is introduced right here is God says that Pharaoh is not going to want to let them go and he is going to harden his heart. Who’s going to win here? Is God’s desire to save and to bless and to free people from slavery going to win or the king’s hardness of heart, stubbornness, and rebellion? With that set of themes we’re right back in the book of Genesis again, aren’t we? It becomes a story about how God’s working out his plan to save humanity despite human sin and rebellion.
Keep paying attention to the words and passages in these chapters about Pharaoh’s heart because sometimes Pharaoh hardens his own heart in rebellion against God. But as a consequence of that, other times we’re told that God hardens Pharaoh’s heart. God uses even human sin to accomplish his purposes in the world. It is a very powerful set of themes being explored here.

So God brings ten acts of justice and judgment on Egypt’s rebellion and on the king’s stubbornness. It comes to its pinnacle point in the moment of Passover. The Pharaoh had made a decree that all firstborn sons of Israelites were to be thrown in the river and killed. The final act of judgment God brings on this genocidal king is to kill all of the firstborn of Egypt in a plague, and that’s what happens on the night of Passover. It’s a very powerful set of images here because the Israelites only escape the plague if they slaughter a lamb and put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost.

So the first time we’re introduced to the theme, God’s salvation, the saving the family of these people, is going to happen through the death of lamb, through the blood of the lamb. It’s a very powerful image that is introduced right here. Through the blood of the lamb, through acts of justice, God rescues and frees the people from Egypt. It culminates in the first worship song in the Bible in chapter 15 called the “Song of Miriam.” It is the people worshipping God after they have been freed from the slavery in Egypt. That is the first main section of the book of Exodus.

What happens is they go through the wilderness (God brings them through the wilderness) and he brings them to the foot of Mt. Sinai [do you like my mountain here]. The next main section of the book which we’ll cover in the next section is about the people camped out at Mt. Sinai.

Let’s just stop and think about what’s going on here. So this set of stories shows how God is working out His plan of salvation in the world. Because of Pharaoh’s sin and stubbornness, things are not going to be rosy. Yahweh’s plan of salvation is not going to be clean. It’s going to be messy. It’s going to mean Yahweh has to get involved in the dirt
of human sin and rebellion. These stories might bother some of you how God’s just hammering judgment on rebellious Egypt. But what it is showing us is that God isn’t going to let parachute salvation down on everybody out of heaven or something. He’s committed to redeeming the human race through human beings, through his story of the people of Israel.

This is a very powerful and challenging set of stories about how God wants to bring freedom to his people and freedom to the whole world. But he will have to confront human sin and rebellion and his whole goal is to get people into freedom so that he can make a covenant with them and dwell and have a relationship with his people. That’s what Mt. Sinai is all about.

So I hope that’s helpful for reading through the first section of the book of Exodus and then we’ll jump into the next half in the next video. See you next time.

Transcribed by Gabby Brucker for OT Lit. at Gordon College (12/8/15)
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