

Shrewsbury Evangelical Church

Bible Reading Scheme

WEEK 36 - beginning 1st January 2012

Exodus 1-5

We begin the New Year with the great account of the Exodus; the title of the Book comes from the Greek which means 'going out'. The events detailed here are most formative and foundational in the history of Israel, its faith and worship. This is the story of God's redemption, of how he faithfully visited the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in order to confirm and develop his covenant with them. In these chapters we see the nation of Israel in a state of utter hopelessness and desperation from every conceivable angle – but God promises to deliver them through his servant, Moses.

DAY ONE – Exodus 1

The first six verses provide a clear overlap with the closing chapters of Genesis: the naming of Jacob's sons and the record of the death of that generation. In verse 7, for the first time, we can properly speak of 'Israel' as a nation, multiplying greatly (see Genesis 1:28, 9:7). Regime change came to Egypt. We cannot be sure of the name of the new Pharaoh, or even the exact date – Moses was probably born around 1530 BC. The new king did not acknowledge the great benefits brought to Egypt through Joseph (v.7); instead he saw the Israelites as a threat to be combated with hard labour. See the fulfilment of Genesis 15:13. We see in this chapter the descent from suspicion to persecution, to dread, and to genocide. The term 'Hebrew' has already been used in Genesis. It had a cultural rather than a racial sense, conveying the Egyptian attitude towards 'foreigners'.

Do you see how God's blessing and the world's enmity are inseparable in this chapter?

*Are the midwives commended **because of their words**, or **in spite of them**(v.19)?*

For Prayer: praise God that he redeems his people from apparent hopelessness.

DAY TWO – Exodus 2

Here we see heroic faith which conquers fear, and God's wonderful providence. Moses was a 'fine child' (v.2, also see Hebrews 11:23). This does not imply that his parents had received a revelation about God's future plans for him. There are striking resemblances between the basket of his chapter and the ark that Noah built. The same Hebrew word is used here as in Genesis 6:14. Both were vessels of salvation. Moses probably remained with his parents until the age of about ten, when he was formally adopted, given the name 'Moses' and a classical Egyptian education (Acts 7:22). Moses, stirred by the his people's plight, chose his own course of action (vv.11-15). God 'remembered his covenant' with the fathers (v.24); this does not mean that he had forgotten and it suddenly entered his mind, but that he determined to act on the basis of it.

Did Moses' mother take a risk? (v.3) Does true faith sometimes seem foolhardy?

What lesson did Moses have to learn as a result of his exploits in verses 11 to 15? Are there lesson here for us as well?

For Prayer: God himself is his people's avenger and vindicator, in his own time and way.

DAY THREE – Exodus 3

Moses is now eighty, and the remaining events of Exodus will unfold over just two years. Though our translations read ‘the angel of the LORD’ (v.2), Moses was faced with the presence of God himself; many would see this as the Second Person of the Godhead.

All the descriptions of the first six verses underline *the holiness of God*.

We notice in verse 11 that Moses is a much humbler man than he was in the previous chapter. When Moses asks for God’s name (v.13) he is asking what sort of God this is, and what he can do for his people. The name ‘I AM’ does not only point to God’s self-existence, *but also to his changeless commitment to be with his people*. See this in Malachi 3:6.

From verses 16 to 23 the LORD makes known his plans for Israel. He will get all the glory and praise over and above Pharaoh (v.19), who was regarded as a god in Egypt.

Looking at verses 2 to 6, what do you understand by God’s holiness?

Was Moses’ hesitation and reluctance (v.11) a qualification or a drawback?

For Prayer: *when God’s glory humbles us then we are better equipped to serve him.*

DAY FOUR – Exodus 4

In this chapter we see that all Moses’ objections are met by the LORD’s provision.

The miracles recorded at the beginning of the chapter are to confirm Moses’ faith as well as the faith of the people. The serpent (vv.3-4) not only reminds us of Satan (Gen. 3:1); it has also been pointed out that Pharaoh’s headdress featured the image of a spitting cobra.

We see in verse 13 a general unwillingness on Moses’ part, but in response God was already sending Aaron to assist Moses.

Israel is the LORD’s ‘firstborn son’ (v.22), a nation privileged and set apart above all others.

The rather strange incident in verses 24 to 26 indicates that Moses, who would function as the leader of God’s people, had to comply with the LORD’s commandments (see Gen. 17:14).

There is a partial fulfilment of God’s promises in verse 31. But Israel are still in Egypt!

Can you identify with Moses’ basic fear (v.13)? Several objections come first (3:13; 4:1,10).

Does verse 19 remind you of anything from the New Testament? Think through the parallels.

For Prayer: *praise God that he uses the weak things of this world to shame the strong.*

DAY FIVE – Exodus 5

If the previous chapter ended with encouragement, this chapter leaves no doubt as to the scale of the struggle which Moses and the people of Israel faced.

Pharaoh did not ‘know the LORD’ (v.2). He would know that this was the God of the Hebrews, but the point is that he did not recognise or submit to any god above himself.

The request to go on a three-day journey (v.3) may be seen as the beginning of a bargaining process. Pharaoh would have realised what this would eventually lead to.

The words of verse 10, ‘Thus says Pharaoh’, demonstrate that he is standing directly against what the LORD has said. His cruel and unreasonable demands are designed to turn the people of Israel against Moses and Aaron, and this is exactly what happens (vv.20-21).

Do we ever grumble or complain because God works out his purposes over a longer period of time, or in a different way, to that which we expect?

What do we learn here about hostility to God’s message, and the right way to respond?

For Prayer: *that we would be steadfast and faithful in the face of opposition.*