

“I AM” - SERMON SERIES ON EXODUS INTRODUCTION, STUDY NOTES, AND SERMON TOPICS

During the Winter and Spring we will preach through the Old Testament book of Exodus. This will come at a time when the culture will be aware of the story, as a major motion picture will be released in December. Exodus is not ultimately about Moses, or the people, or even slavery and injustice. Exodus is God’s self-revelation in story form, as He interacts with the descendants of Abraham to rescue and redeem them from slavery, bring them to Himself in order to have a relationship with them, and bring transformation to them as a people. The basic purpose of this series will be for us to preach through the narrative story of Exodus so that we can show the character and acts of God and grow in our understanding of the God who is.

The Torah or Pentateuch

The Old Testament opens with the Torah (Hebrew title for these books which mean “Law”) or Pentateuch (Title used often in Christian thought). Exodus is the second book of the Torah.

Pentateuch - First five books of the Bible (five scrolls in Greek)

Torah - Law, or the books of Law. This is the Hebrew term for the first five books of the Bible because they deal extensively with the Hebrew covenant and law.

These opening books of the Bible lay the groundwork for understanding the rest of Scripture. The Torah opens the grand narrative of God’s story told in the Bible as God reveals Himself to the nation known as Israel. God has chosen to reveal Himself by both stating His character in propositions and demonstrating that character as He acts in history, specifically in relationship with His people. The Old Testament story begins with the One True God creating all things, including Adam and Eve in His image. The story of creation in the Torah is in contrast with the stories being told by the other nations at that time who hold polytheistic views and have creation stories involving a conflict with the gods. But Genesis shows us that God is one, and that He is distinct, outside, and sovereign over creation and the people He has formed. They are in perfect relationship with their Creator, and therefore also in peace with each other, with the world around them, and with themselves. But their decision to sin and dethrone God in their hearts results in the Fall. From here the story has two distinct themes. The first is the world as it exists without God’s intervention. While God is, of course, governing, He is not working toward the good of people who are in willful rebellion. The result is that the world and its inhabitants spin further from God and into more and more chaos and ruin. But the other theme starts in Genesis 12 with God’s choosing and call of a man named Abraham. God makes a covenant filled with promises to this one person. Abraham believes God, although he also has times of miserable failure (including attempts to pawn his wife off twice). The big promise to Abraham was that God would raise a great nation from his descendants, which was a crazy promise since Abraham was an old dude with a post-menopausal wife when the promise was made. Without children, how could God make a great nation from this guy’s descendants. Abraham even messes the story up when he fathers a child with a servant girl in an attempt to fix what God had not done. Yet, God promised that the child would come through Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Twenty five years after the initial promise, when Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 90, God fulfilled the promise, and this old couple had a son named Isaac. God kept his promise, but

greater than this, through this family God has entered back in to our story by initiating His ultimate rescue which will happen through the descendants of Abraham. Genesis tells us how God began with a single man, and that man's descendants become a family. By the end of Genesis the clan is 70 people large and end up living in Egypt under the care of the Pharaoh.

The second book, Exodus picks up the story 400 years later, and two major things have happened. First, a new Pharaoh (Egyptian king) is at the helm and he does not remember the story of Joseph and God's care of Egypt those 400 years earlier. The second thing is that this little family is now a nation of people living in slavery. Pharaoh knows that the group of people known as Israel are large and if they ever got it in their mind to revolt it would be bad for Egypt. They are now slaves and the economic well-being of the Egyptian economy depends on their submission and servitude. The slavery is horrible and the injustice at the beginning of the book is great, including infanticide at the command of Pharaoh and the hands of the Egyptians. This is the context for the next four books of the Torah, including the story of Exodus. As far as His actions, it seems that God has been silent for 400 years, but God hears the groans and cries of His people, and He is going to keep the promises made to Abraham, promises that include making Israel a great nation and giving them the land of Canaan (plot of ground that is modern day Israel). Exodus tells us the miraculous story of God's great deliverance of Israel from slavery to the Egyptians and His bringing them to Himself in order to make a covenant with this nation. He is going to save them from Pharaoh but also save them to a relationship with their God. While He does this God will both tell them who He is (by giving the Law, speaking about His nature, and giving passages in the Torah that describes Himself) and by showing them who He is in His acts as both judge and redeemer. Exodus begins with the Hebrews (for the purpose of this series we will use the title Hebrew, Jew, and Israelite synonymously) in slavery in Egypt and ends with them free from human slavery but in a relationship with God as His servants and sons. He saves them. And there are three big reasons for His acts.

1. To be the basis of the faith of the Hebrew people - For the rest of their history the acts of God in the Exodus story is their formation as a nation, and the source of their national identity. To this day religious Jews tell the story of the Exodus as their own story and celebrate festivals and feasts like the Passover to be reminded of God's acts. For the rest of the Old Testament Israel will identify themselves as the people whom God redeemed from slavery at the hand of Pharaoh.
2. To display His character for the entire world to see - God does not choose Israel because they are special. Actually, His choice of Israel is the opposite, it was to display that their God was special. He chose them out of polytheism and pluralism to know the One True God so that the world would see the true character of God by how He deals with His own chosen people. Example here, the best way to know the true character of a man is to see how he loves and interacts with his kids. In the same way, God is the God of all people, the sovereign of the world. But the world sees God acting on behalf of His children and therefore can discover the character of this God.
3. To prepare the redemptive story - The entire story of Exodus has an intended end that goes way beyond the story itself. All throughout the story of Exodus we are given hints that the nation of Israel is not the hope of mankind, but also that from Israel there would be one who would rescue Israel again from a different kind of slavery. While Pharaoh was a wicked taskmaster, we find quickly that there is another wicked ruler governing the

hearts of the Hebrews, but this wicked ruler is within. The nation fails miserably, but God is faithful to His promises. Imbedded in the story are images, types, pictures, and even direct references to a True and Better Israel that will show up in a single person. This person will both represent Israel by being all that they cannot be, and will substitute Himself for God's people by being the true sacrifice pictured in animal sacrifices in the Tabernacle.

The other three books of the Torah are Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Leviticus is a manual of priestly regulations given to the Levites. The Levites were one of the twelve tribes of Israel coming from the twelve sons of Jacob in Genesis. They were entrusted with the responsibility to care for the Tabernacle and be the family of priests. Leviticus gives an explanation on how these people are to lead the people spiritually. Numbers completes the narrative of Israel's story as they leave Egypt and head to the Promised Land (Canaan has this name because it is the land God promised Abraham would one day be inhabited by his descendants). Numbers is the dark sequel to Exodus and demonstrates the people's unbelief, complaining, and sin. God is faithful, they are not. The result is that what should have been a one year trip from Egypt to this land ends up being 39 years of wandering in the desert. The final book of the Torah is Deuteronomy which primarily consists of three sermons given by Moses at the end of his life calling a new generation of Hebrew people to repentance and to reaffirm their covenant with God.

*These five books have distinct features and cover various history, but were put together as a single entity.

Author

Moses wrote the Torah. While there are other theories as to authorship, there are multiple reasons to affirm the historical belief that the Torah and Exodus were written by Moses.

- The books themselves affirm Mosaic authorship. There are several passages where Moses affirms that he is the one who wrote down what God revealed - see Deuteronomy 31:24-26
- Jesus affirms Moses as the author as well - see John 5:45-47
- All of Hebrew and church history until 1800 affirmed Moses as the author of the Torah.
- Attempts to rebuff Moses as the author came from scholarship who approached the Bible as nothing more than a human document. Their desire was to treat the text of Scripture scientifically and reject the divine or miraculous. Without lots of detail, they reject Moses as the author, because if Moses really was the author then the events actually happened. So there must be a better explanation for the Jews creating a story that explains their dependence on this story for their existence while we all know (hopefully you see my tongue in cheek here) these events never really happened. So the writing of the Torah had to have come at a much later time. The most famous attempt to do this is called the Documentary Hypothesis. If you want more information on this theory feel free to come see me. I can tell you that honest scholarship in the last several years has basically debunked this theory, although it is still held by liberal Bible scholars (and probably thrown out on Wikipedia as fact).

Audience

The Hebrew people, in order to understand their heritage, their God, their culture, and their special covenant relationship with God. Moses probably penned most of the Torah including the book of Exodus near the end of his life during the years of wandering in the desert as he wrote in order to prepare the next generation of Hebrew people for their inheritance of the land of promise.

Types of Literature

Historical narrative, law, poetry. Most of Exodus is told as a story, but the other types of literature are found in the narrative.

Key beliefs and concepts for the understanding of the Torah & rest of the Old Testament

1. **Radical monotheism** - From the outset, the Old Testament is the story of one God, who is personal, creator, involved in the affairs of the world, just, gracious, and sovereign. The key question of the Old Testament is one of worship. Do God's people worship the One, True God or do they give themselves to other spiritualities and idols from the surrounding nations. The reason this is important is that a person will naturally drift toward the object of his worship. People who worship God as He is revealed in Scripture will become like Him. But worship of idols will lead people toward the self-centeredness of all idolatry.

2. **Election of Israel as a people** - The story is about redemption, through an elect nation. Israel was chosen by God to be the vehicle for revealing Himself and ultimately for the sending of His son.

***The big storyline here looks like this - God called a man (Abraham) and that man became a family, that family became a people living in slavery in Egypt, God delivered them from slavery and made them a nation, He gave them a land, and made them a Kingdom. And God did all of this in order to send a person (Jesus).**

3. **Covenant** - An unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and people that stipulates the condition of their relationship. There are six key covenants in the Scriptures.

- The covenant with Adam - the promise of eternal life, staying the garden of Eden, blessedness, and the presence of God. Then the promise of a redeemer to crush Satan.
- The covenant with Noah (Genesis 8:21-22) - never again to destroy the world by a flood.
- The covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 15, 17)- To make him a great nation and bless all nations through his seed. Circumcision was to be the sign.
- The covenant with Moses and Israel - They would be a special people, set apart for the purpose of God, Yahweh would be their God, they would be His people. The law of God is a sort of treaty, their part of the deal. (Exodus 19-20)
- The covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:12-16) - Royalty and the kingly line in Jerusalem. An everlasting throne and kingdom from the line of David.
- The new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) - A new heart and forgiveness.

4. **Messianic expectations and promises** - From the earliest chapters of the Old Testament, the promise of a rescuer, an anointed one of God is one of the key themes. A large part of the story is the revelation and prophetic promise of this person, developed in greater detail.

Themes of Exodus

1. **God's faithfulness to His promises** - God acts because He made promises to Abraham and He will keep those promises. Those promises include a great nation from the descendants of Abraham, a land in which they will dwell, and that all nations would ultimately be blessed because of Abraham's seed. The book of Exodus is the moment in history where God acts decisively in order to be a promise keeping God with His people.

2. **God's sovereign control of history and rulers** - We will see quickly that the Pharaoh in Egypt believes he is a god, but powerless against the One True God. Pharaoh makes the Hebrews feel helpless, but he will end up being helpless against the act of God on behalf of His people. Yet, God gives him opportunity to repent, but Pharaoh's heart is hardened. This hardening is a dual thing, as sometimes the text tells us that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, but we are also told that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and that before the events happened God had already determined that His glory would be displayed as Pharaoh's heart was hardened and the plagues were sent. God's plan was to act in such a way that the world would know His awesome power, and Pharaoh was raised up as a ruler to be the one who would make this happen.

3. **God's name** - In Exodus 3 God gives His people a new name, a name that is given to those in relationship with Him. For Israel, God was more than a distant deity who was mysterious. God became a close friend who acted on their behalf and then gave them a new name, only to be used by them in relationship. And that name is beautiful. When Moses asks God to share His name, God replies that He is to be called "I AM". God is the great I AM, the self-existing one. But God also is whatever His people will need at any point in the story. This name is the foundation for the people's faith which is not just belief in God but faith that draws people into relationship with God.

4. **God's presence and provision** - While slaves God is with His people, but seems unseen. Yet, the birth of Moses at the beginning of the story is proof that God is acting silently. God then shows His presence and provision for His people by sending plagues to the Egyptians while shielding the Hebrews from the same pestilences, including the Death Angel. God is with His people as they travel to the Red Sea and provides a way of escape. He is then with His people in visible form as they travel appearing as a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. And God provides food and water for them in the desert. God's presence is the defining factor for Israel in the story of Exodus. This presence is ultimately pictured in the building of the Tabernacle, where God will meet with His people. The tent is built and always put in the middle of the camp with the 12 tribes surrounding it, God is in the midst of His people.

5. **Grace and Law** - God brings His people to Mount Sinai where He meets with them. It is here that God forms the covenant with Israel as a nation. God will give the 10 Commandments and the rest of the Law to Moses and the people while on this mountain. God is perfect and holy, and has expectations of His people. But before giving the Law God rescues them and brings them to Himself. The order matters as God is showing us the redemptive order in the story. First comes His acts of redemption as God delivers people from slavery. Second, God reconciles with people and brings them into a relationship with himself. Third, He changes their lives by teaching them

how to live with the One True God as their God. The rules are given to people who are already redeemed and reconciled with God. Reverse the order and the Gospel story is destroyed. Yet this is the path of religion, to begin with keeping the rules hoping that somehow religious acts and rulekeeping can lead to being right with God and somehow redeemed. Exodus ultimately is about grace and God doing for Israel what they could not do on their own. To turn the story into a giant story about a God who makes rules misses the point of Exodus, and the Bible as a whole.

6. God's redemptive plan - The heart of the story is God's redemption. God rescues His people from slavery from a wicked taskmaster. He sets them free, but freedom in this story is not the right to do whatever they wish. As Americans we have bought into the idea that Freedom is the right to do what we want. Exodus begins with God's people in slavery in Egypt and it ends with them on the Mountain of God in worship. True freedom is only found when they worship, when they center their lives on their God. So Exodus points us both to the greater problem and ultimately to the truer solution. God rescues them from Egypt, but these people have so much of Egypt in them and they cannot shake it. They are still slaves because anything they love more than God and anything they serve in place of God will put them in slavery. This is the essence of sin, centering our lives on anything other than God. And whatever we pursue as ultimate will ultimately make us its slave. So the hope is not being set free to do whatever we want. Freedom is found when God reorients our lives to see His glory so that we see and worship Him. This is why there must be a new, greater Exodus that is coming. The book of Exodus is a model for something greater coming, it is a promise to be fulfilled, it is a shadow of a greater redemption. And throughout the pages of Exodus the image of the coming Messiah is pictured. Through the series we will see this, but a few examples. We see Jesus in the Burning Bush in Exodus 3, the Great "I AM" will come in the flesh. We see Jesus in the Passover as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. We see Jesus pictures in the giving of the Law because it is a resume that cannot be fulfilled by any other human so we cry out for someone who actually does what it says. And Jesus is imaged in both the building of the Tabernacle and the development of the Priesthood at the end of the book, as Jesus is the true meeting place between man and God and the greater mediator who will make a perfect sacrifice for our sin. So ultimately the book of Exodus is a portrait being painted that points us to our need of Jesus and the promise of His coming for a truer and better redemption.

Bibliography of Resources

In other words, here is a list of resources I will be using in my study, and recommend if you would like to do further study of the book of Exodus.

Redemption: Freed by Jesus from the Idols we Worship and the Wounds we Carry by Mike Wilkerson

The New American Commentary: Exodus by Douglas Stuart - **Note, we recommend this commentary for everyone. It is an accessible whole Bible commentary written by some of the best Christian theologians of our time.**

The New Bible Commentary, D. A. Carson, R. T. France

The Message of Exodus by J. A. Motyer

The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus by Peter Enns

Gleanings in Exodus by Arther W. Pink
Exodus: Saved for God's Glory by Philip Graham Ryken
Knowing God by J. I Packer

OUR SERMON AND READING PLAN

We would like you to join in with us in reading and studying this book. Here is how we are outlining and preaching the book, with the passages being covered and the big issues in the story for each week. We would love to have you read the text before coming and interact with the story with us. Our desire in preaching this book is to help you know the Word of God better so that you can better understand the Gospel and apply its implications to your lives.

January 4 - *The God who Redeems* (Exodus 1)

Exodus opens with a transition from Genesis telling us that the small family of Jacob in Egypt has become a nation of people 400 years later, but they are in slavery. They have a wicked ruler in Pharaoh who seeks to promote his own power while crushing the Hebrews through slavery and infanticide. But God's silence does not mean He is inactive.

*This is the context of God's unfolding story

- Election
- Suffering
- Deliverance

January 11 - *The God who Sees and Hears* (Exodus 2)

*The birth and early life of Moses is the backdrop of what happens in 2:23-25

*God remembers, sees, hears, which means He is about to act

*The events in Moses's life are not random, they are purposeful, God is molding Moses to be a humble deliverer

January 18 - *The God who Is, He Just Is* (Exodus 3-4)

*In the call of Moses at the burning bush, God gives Moses His covenant name, and the implications reach far in the text of Scripture and our relationship to Him.

*This is where "I am" finds its meaning, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is also the God of Moses and the Hebrews. And He is going to act,

January 25 - *The God who Calls* (Exodus 3-4)

*God calls Moses, but his response is less than a bold and believing guy.

*Moses is full of excuses, but God is full of grace

*The story even ends with Moses's failure to circumcise his own kids

February 1 - *The God who makes Promises* (Exodus 5-6)

*Pharaoh does not respond favorably to Moses, and ups the ante

*God's response is to make the promise of deliverance to His people. Once this happens nothing will stop this.

February 8 - *The God who Judges* (Exodus 7-10)

- *The first 9 plagues is God's judgment on Egypt, Pharaoh, and over the gods of the Egyptians

- *Pharaoh's hardness of heart is also part of the judgment

- *There are no innocent Egyptians, so they are all affected

- *For God to give justice to Israel He must act against the injustice of Egypt

February 15 - *The God who Atones and Covers* (Exodus 11-13)

- *God is going to send the final plague, the Death Angel who will take the lives of all the firstborn in Egypt. T

- *For the Hebrews God initiates the celebration of the Passover

- *This leads to the Exodus - the people leave Egypt

- *And to the consecration of the 1st born for all of their history, forever they will celebrate the Passover and consecrate the first born, because this story is always their story. No matter how far away we get from Exodus, they are the people God delivered from slavery with His mighty hand.

February 22 - *The God who Delivers* (Exodus 14-15)

- *The parting of the Red Sea is the climactic moment where God's deliverance is full and complete

- *The response of worship is beautiful

February 29 - *The God who Provides and Protects* (Exodus 16-18)

- *They have a water problem, a food problem, a passage problem, and a division problem

- *God is with them, that is most important. But in His presence he also gives them the answer to their needs.

March 1 - *The God who Makes Covenant* (Exodus 19)

- *God has redeemed his people brought them to the mountain of God, where He meets them

- *God lays out the stipulations of the covenant he will make with His people

March 8 - *The God who Legislates, Part 1* (Exodus 20)

- *The 10 commandments show us the moral character of God and the expectations on His people.

- *The order of the commandments - 4 vertical dealing with our relationship with God, 6 horizontal dealing with our relationship with each other - our belief affects our relationships

March 15 - *The God who Legislates, Part 2* (Exodus 20)

- *The 10 commandments are there to shape the character of God's people, but they also show us that we cannot be what they ask us to be.

March 22 - *The God who is Holy* (Exodus 21-23:19)

- *The 613 laws in the Old Testament communicate something deep about the character of

God and our character as well.

March 29 - *The God who is Faithful* (Exodus 23:20-24)

*The promise of land shows us that God has sovereignly settled the end of the story, He will deliver them, and give them the Promised Land, He will drive out the nations, and fight for them.

*Their response is belief and repentance - embracing the covenant.

April 5 (Easter) - *The God who is Just* (Exodus 26-27)

*The building of the Tabernacle is God's way of painting a picture of what access into His presence looks like.

*The first thing people would pass was the Altar, the place of sacrifice. For us this is the cross.

*The cross grants us access into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God, and that access is now open to everyone.

April 12 - *The God who Dwells With His People* (Exodus 26-27, 36-38)

*God commands the building of a Tabernacle, which is designed to image His presence in the middle of the camp.

*The instructions are specific, with each piece to be made exactly as designed, because each thing in this tent images something, and most of the time someone

*The last few chapters of Exodus repeat these chapters, showing us at least in the Tabernacle and the Priests that Israel followed the commands exactly as God had given them

April 19 - *the God who Mediates* (Exodus 28-29, 39)

*God gives his people the priesthood, leaders who will serve as the go between, mediator between God and man.

*These priests always point us to our great High Priest

April 26 - *The God who Invites us to Join Him* (Exodus 30-31, 34)

*The people are given a census tax, but they are also invited to sacrificial giving which ends up with more than is needed being donated

*Aaron and his sons will serve in the priesthood

*Oholiab and Bezaliel lead the craftsmen in building the tent - gift based ministry and leadership

*So much more than just Moses here!

*Sabbath command though are a reminder that their work is only effective with God as center.

May 3 - *The God who Gives Grace* (Exodus 32-34)

*The Golden Calf story shows how messed up these people, and we really are

*At this point they deserved God's justice, but God gives grace

*New tablets, another covenant confirmation, and a leader who sees God show God is not giving up on them

May 10 - *The God Who Has a People* (Exodus 35)

*The story is not about one guy, but about a nation of people and their God. He has kept promises, and they are all participating in the purpose of God.

*His glory, their good, Gospel to the nations - this is the plan

May 17 - *The God who Goes before His People* (Exodus 40)

*The story ends with Moses and the people erecting the Tabernacle, God dwells in the middle of the camp. He will lead them with the cloud, setting their course. They are to trust Him and obey.

*As they do this the glory of the Lord will fill the Tabernacle.

*John 1:14 - Christ pitched his tent among us

May 24 - *The God who Tells Stories* (Exodus 40:34-38)

*Exodus is the story of God, but it does not end here

*How this story became the people's redemption story for the entire Old Testament, this is their defining moment.

*the Gospel follows this story as the model of redemption, God's story is told in the redemption of His people.