

## You Shall Know I AM:

### Bondage and the Birth (Exodus 1:1-2:10)

Preached by Pastor Jason Tarn at HCC on August 19, 2018

#### Introduction

- ❖ This morning we're kickstarting a new sermon series through the book of Exodus. We're going to go through all 40 chapters, so it's not going to be a quick series. This fall we'll only get through the first 17 chapters. That'll be Part 1. Then we'll have to wait until 2019 to finish off Part 2 and the remaining chapters. So this will be a heavy investment for us.
  - **Now I realize there are some pastors these days trying to get their congregations to “unhitch” their faith from the Old Testament.** By “unhitch”, they mean we need to help Christians understand (and defend) the faith without having to rely on the Old Testament. They're not necessarily denying its truthfulness, but because the Old Testament's worldview and values and laws are considered so foreign (and even backwards) to modern people, some teachers are saying that nowadays we'll make a better case for Jesus if we leave the Old Testament out of the argument.
  
- ❖ **One of the many good reasons to have an Exodus series is to demonstrate the fallacy of that kind of thinking.** Have you ever walked into a theatre halfway into the film? Or you showed up late to a friend's house, and they've started a movie and are halfway through?
  - **Just imagine trying to watch a complex, cerebral movie like *The Matrix*, but starting in the second half.** Why do they look like poor beggars in one scene but cool runway models in the next? How are they so flexible and able to bend so far backwards? Wait, how does he know kung fu?
  
- ❖ Now some movies have plot lines that are so predictable, that it doesn't matter. But then there are movies that apply so many layers of symbolism and foreshadowing, that have so many twists and turns, and so many characters and subplots, that you're just lost. **You might get the gist of it in the end, but there's so much more in the story that you failed to understand and appreciate.**
  - That's why we need the Old Testament. That's why we can't unhitch our New Testament faith from the Old Testament scriptures. **We'll lose the ability to recognize and appreciate the beauty and goodness and truthfulness of the New Testament, especially of the gospel.**
  
- ❖ That's why, in our preaching, we try to go back and forth between a series through a NT book and then an OT book. Back in the spring we studied 1 Timothy, and now we're in Exodus. **Our goal is to equip you with biblical themes and categories from the Old that you'll need to better understand and appreciate the New.**
  - And Exodus is arguably one of the best books to help you do that. **Some have called it the Old Testament gospel.** I read a book this summer called *Echoes of Exodus*, which makes that case. The authors try to show how the Exodus event is key to understanding the Bible. There are so many illusions in the rest of Scripture to the redemptive deeds of God found in this book. **So you're going to have a hard time grasping the nuances of God's greater work of redemption in the New Testament without a working knowledge of Exodus.**

- ❖ **An example they give in the book is how you're not going to fully understand and appreciate Disney's *The Lion King* unless you're familiar with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.** Yes, Disney based it on *Hamlet*. Now even if you have no idea what *Hamlet* is about, I'm sure you can enjoy *The Lion King*. But a good grasp of *Hamlet* is only going to increase your enjoyment the next time you watch *The Lion King*. You have more categories to help you better empathize with the loss of a father, the betrayal of an uncle, the shame of exile, etc.
  - That's what I hope to see happen as we study Exodus. **I want your love for Christ and his gospel to deepen and your appreciation for what he accomplished on his cross to increase.** I believe studying the Old Testament gospel is going to help you grasp the height, breadth, depth of the gospel.
    - So as we begin this morning with chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2, I'm going to break it down using gospel categories. We'll consider God's plan, the enemy's strategy, and God's deliverance.

### **The Continuity of God's Plan**

- ❖ Let's begin by considering the continuity of God's plan. God has a plan that he introduced in the first book of the Bible – a plan to bless all the nations, all the families, of the earth through one chosen nation, one chosen family. And speaking of walking into a movie halfway in, that's what it's like to start reading in Exodus 1 without any knowledge of what took place in Genesis.
  - **Exodus is really best understood as one chapter in a five chapter book.** The Torah or the Pentateuch is the ancient name for the first five books of Scripture. So if it's to be read as one whole book, then chapter 2 obviously should be read in light of what took place in chapter 1.
- ❖ The continuity between the two books is glaring when you consider the first seven verses of Exodus. **First off, if you could read it in Hebrew, you would notice that the first Hebrew word in the book is the word “and”.** *“And these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob.”* English translations typically omit it because nobody starts a book off with the word “and”. But that's the point: Exodus is more of a chapter in a larger book than a stand alone book by itself.
  - There are other points of continuity. For example, if you read v7, and you'll hear an echo of Genesis 1:28 where God tells the first couple to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Now listen to Exodus 1:7, *“But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.”* The similar word choices are no coincidence.
    - The author is reminding the reader of God's creation mandate to multiply and fill the earth, and **he's suggesting that what was happening to the Israelites in Egypt – as they multiplied and grew – was a sign of God's favor and blessing upon them.**

- ❖ There's another point of continuity back in v1. The first six words in v1 are an exact repetition of Genesis 46:8 – where we're given a more detailed genealogy of the sons of Jacob who came with him into Egypt with their whole families.
  - This genealogy of one particular family reminds us of God's sovereign choice to bless one family starting with their patriarch Abraham. **In Genesis 12, God makes a promise to Abraham – a promise to bless him as the father of a great people (with many offspring) settled in a good and fruitful land (12:1-3, 7).** He reaffirms that promise in Genesis 13:14-17, chapter 15:5-7, and chapter 17:4-8.
    - **But of all of God's promises to Abraham and his offspring, the greatest promise was his promise to be their God (17:8).** The greatest blessing – greater than a large family and an even larger land – is the blessing of knowing God and knowing that he is *your* God.
  
- ❖ So by the time we arrive in Exodus, God has proven himself faithful, having given Abraham offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky. But, at this point, they have yet to find rest in their own land, so that unfulfilled promise drives much of the plot moving forward.
  - **But the biggest theme of Exodus has to do with God's promise to be their God,** and throughout this book he begins to reveal himself – starting with his name, then his sovereignty and power, his justice and mercy, his law and grace, and of course his glory. **One of the common refrains in the book is God saying multiple times that I'm going to do *this* or *that* so that you (Israelites or Egyptians) shall know that I am the LORD (cf. 6:7; 7:5; 8:22; 14:4, 18).**
    - Every time you'll see the LORD written in small caps, which is a way to reference the name *Yahweh* – the self-revealed name of God found in Exodus 3:14. That's where God tells Moses to tell the Israelites that I AM sent you. God's name is I AM. That's why we've called this sermon series "You Shall Know I AM". That's the big idea of the book. **It's all about God revealing the knowledge of the glory of who he is – to his people and to the nations.**
  
- ❖ **The point I'm making here is that the same God has the same plan for his people today and for the world.** The continuity extends into our day. God's promises to Abraham of a great people and land still stand, and his blessing still flows through Abraham's children.
  - But as we read into the New Testament, the Scriptures progressively reveal that **the promise of a people** will be fulfilled – not just through one people, one nation, the Israelites – but eventually through a new kingdom people made up of all the nations of the world. And **the promise of rest in a land of your own** will be fulfilled – not just through one geographic region on the Mediterranean coast of the Middle East – but eventually through a final rest in a new creation on a newly renewed earth.
  
- ❖ It's not because God changed his plan by the time we enter the New Testament. It's just that the grand vision of his promises to bless all the people and all the earth didn't come into shape until the One True Israelite, the Messiah, the Son of God arrived to fulfill all the promises originally given to Abraham.

- ❖ **In Galatians 3:7-9, the Apostle Paul explains how anyone can be a child of Abraham through faith in the Messiah.** It reads, *“<sup>7</sup>Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” <sup>9</sup>So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”*
  - God’s plan, from the beginning, had a view to bless the nations – all the people groups of the world. And the plan to do that has been continuous. And it always starts with God revealing himself to individuals.
  
- ❖ That could be you. I don’t know where all of you stand in relation to God, but perhaps some of you here don’t know him. **The good news is that the God you don’t know is the God who seeks to be known – whose heart is to reveal himself to creation.** God already knows you. He wants you to know him. And knowing him requires knowing his Son. (Jn. 1:18).
  
- ❖ Now there are also those of you who assume you know God because you were born into a Christian family and raised in a church where you were taught about God as far back as you can remember. **But knowing about God is not the same as knowing God.**
  - For some of you, it's like you're living under the Old Covenant, thinking you became a child of Abraham – part of the people of God – by physical birth, by being born into the faith. But that’s not how it works under the New Covenant. No one is born into the faith. You have to be born again to have faith. **You don’t become a child of Abraham by physical birth but by spiritual re-birth.** You need to be born again.
    - That's how God is revealed to you. That's his heart. That's his plan from the beginning – to make himself known to individuals among a chosen people that they might extend that knowledge to all the nations.

### **The Misery of the Enemy's Strategy**

- ❖ But from the beginning there's been an enemy trying to unravel that plan. This leads to our second point. We considered the continuity of God's plan. Now starting in v8, we see the misery caused by the enemy's strategy to undo what God has set in motion.
  - What we're going to see is an ancient strategy. **We're going to see Pharaoh try to stop God's people – and thereby his plan – by means of slavery and death.** That's nothing new. That's just an extension of the same strategy our real enemy has always applied. After tempting the first couple to disobey, the devil has been subjecting mankind to other masters and terrorizing them with death.
  
- ❖ What we read here is an extension of that. A new Pharaoh came to power who didn’t know Joseph. And the growing number of Israelites became a growing threat. They were beginning to outnumber the Egyptians. What if they form an alliance with an invading army and escape? So they made them slaves. Look at v13, *“<sup>13</sup>So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup>and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.”*

- ❖ What's worth noting is how it says in v12 that the more God's people were oppressed, the more they multiplied. **Suppressing them only resulted in spreading them.** That's the sovereign grace of God at work. Sinful men can oppress God's people meaning it for evil, but God can sovereignly work through their oppression meaning it for good (cf. Gen. 50:20).
  - We see this same phenomenon play out in the book of Acts as the first disciples are persecuted and thrown in jail, and yet it emboldens them to keep preaching Jesus and more get added to their number. And when the hammer really drops on the church in Jerusalem, it serves, in God's providence, as the motivation they need to scatter as his witnesses to Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 8:1).
  
- ❖ **Church, God's sovereign grace is still at work today through the hostility and oppression directed at Christians in our nation and all the nations of earth.** When we're praying for the Church in America or in any other country, we should be praying for peace and the preservation (or the increase) of religious liberty. But let's not lose hope no matter how bleak the situation. For as we can see, from ancient of days, God is still sovereign and his grace still works through the wickedest and grimmest of circumstances.
  
- ❖ Now when we get to v15, Pharaoh recognizes that enslaving God's people has only resulted in expanding God's people. So he adopts a more diabolical, murderous strategy. **He instructs the Hebrew midwives to kill all newborn baby boys.** If he can cull out an entire generation of young men, then they have less to fear about the growing population of Israelites.
  - **But we're told, in v17, that the Hebrew midwives feared God more than man and refused to go along.** When they were called in to explain the policy failure, they said the Hebrew women are vigorous, and their babies pop out before the midwife has time to arrive. Now it's not clear when that's a white lie or maybe God sovereignly did cause the labor to happen faster than normal.
  
- ❖ **Either way, these midwives serve as an example of courage and godly shrewdness, navigating the complexities of their profession without compromising their convictions.** Many of you are in the medical profession, where you deal with issues of life and death. As the culture of death continues to pervade the very profession dedicated to the preservation of life – you can look to these Hebrew midwives as models of courage, worthy of imitation. **May you likewise refuse to meet the demands of the culture of death and stand firm for life.** And may the Lord deal well with you as he did for those women and their families.
  - Now if we read on in v22, we see Pharaoh growing more desperate, and he issues a horrific edict – **calling for all baby Hebrew boys to be thrown into the Nile.** It's an unspeakable evil. But it comes at no surprise when you consider how it was likely the devil who incited Pharaoh to carry out his strategy.
  
- ❖ Remember, the devil was told back in Genesis 3 that his doom would be sealed by the birth of a boy from offspring of Eve (Gen. 3:15) who would crush his head as he bruised his heel. **Ever since that day, the devil has been targeting boys in the line of Eve.**

- Think of how he incited Cain to kill Abel or his older brothers to betray Joseph. And now as the number of baby boys exponentially grows, the devil incites a much larger, systematic approach to deal with his one fear – the one question that keeps him up at night: *Who is this offspring of Eve?*
- ❖ He turn to slavery and death. That's been the enemy's strategy. And by highlighting it in chapter 1, this book is saying we share the same affliction as the Israelites. We're all enslaved to something and in need of deliverance. And it's always deeper than we tend to think.
  - Just think about the Israelites. Even after they're delivered from their chains and taskmasters and they're settled in a land of their own – **the rest of the Old Testament demonstrates how God's people are still enslaved but to chains that are invisible in the heart and taskmasters that are internal in the flesh.**
- ❖ That's what Jesus tried to explain to the Jews of his day. They saw the book of Exodus as merely a story about God and their ancestors and not as an illustration of their spiritual condition. Listen to **John 8:31-34**, "*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" <sup>33</sup>*They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"* <sup>34</sup>*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."*
- ❖ **Friends, let's not make the same mistake and miss the fact that Exodus is not just a story, it's an illustration that reveals something about our own struggles with sin.** All of us, in our own flesh, are slaves to sin. No matter how hard we try to rise above ourselves, we always fall back into familiar patterns of sin and disobedience. We're enslaved. But there is freedom. If the Son of God sets you free, you are free indeed (Jn. 8:36). His gospel truth will set you free. That's the good news of Christianity.
- ❖ **Let's also be careful not to make the mistake of assuming that slavery and submission are the same thing or that freedom means no more rules or authority over you.** This is a point I really want to drive home for those of you who are incoming college freshmen. I'm going to assume most of you grew up with your parents taking you to church. But now you're experiencing a new found freedom. No one is going to make you go to church.
  - But here's where you need to understand the enemy's strategy. **He's going to try to fool you into thinking that true freedom (and thereby true happiness) will be found by throwing off the rules and religion of your youth.**
- ❖ But the book of Exodus teaches something very different. As we study this book, we're going to see that freedom from slavery led God's people to the foot of Mt. Sinai where they were given laws/rules. Where they were called to submit to the authority of their God and King.
  - Freedom is not about throwing off all authority. **Freedom is about submitting yourself under a good authority and under the right rules and laws that are life-giving and meant for your joy and flourishing.**

- ❖ **Maybe you've heard it said that you can't liberate a goldfish by taking him out of his fishbowl.** You could argue that the limitations of the fishbowl are unfair restrictions to his freedom. So you want to liberate him and let him choose to go wherever he wants to go and live wherever he wants to live. But you'll just kill him.
  - Friends, that's exactly what the enemy is going to do to you. **He's going to entice you with a false form of freedom that only leads to death.** Stick with Jesus and with his rules and authority, which are meant to give life and not take it. The Son has come to set you free so you are free indeed.

### **The Unexpectedness of God's Deliverance**

- ❖ That leads to our third point. The misery caused by the devil's strategy leads to the unexpectedness of God's deliverance. As we go into chapter 2, we see God setting down a pattern for how he's going to deliver his people. He sends them a deliverer – one who is like them but who is different from birth.
  - We're told that God set apart a young priest for the task. His parents were Levites, the tribe that would later be dedicated as priests. I think the mention of his Levitical heritage is foreshadowing the priestly role that Moses is going to play. Many times in Exodus, you're going to see him standing in the gap, interceding for the people, pleading for mercy.
- ❖ **There's a lot of foreshadowing going on in Moses's birth narrative.** Just look at v3. There it says, after hiding Moses for three months, his mother realized she couldn't keep him concealed much longer. So she makes a basket for him. That word for *basket (tevah)* is the same word for *ark* that you find in Genesis 6-8. And just like Noah's ark, Moses's was also covered with pitch. The similarities would not have been lost on the Israelites reading this.
  - **Just as God used an ark in the past to protect and preserve his people from the waters of destruction, he's doing it again.** This foreshadows what comes later in the book when his people are threaten once again by waters of destruction.
- ❖ Notice how it says in v3 that Moses was placed in the Nile "*among the reeds*". That word for *reeds* shows up later in Exodus 13:18 when the people arrive at banks of the Red Sea (lit. the sea of reeds). Right before God parts it. **The point is clear: God is going to keep to protecting and preserving his people through waters of destruction.**
  - This reinforces the importance of reading Scripture progressively and recognizing how earlier events of deliverance are supplying you with categories that will help you better understand and appreciate the greater deliverances to come.
    - And that goes back to what I said in the beginning about why we're studying Exodus in the first place. **I'm convinced that with a better grasp of the Old Testament gospel, you'll have a better and firmer grasp of the real gospel – God's ultimate deliverance through Christ.** The two events are clearly connected in Scripture.

- ❖ There's this moment in the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 9:30, where Christ is on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he's talking with two men, Moses and Elijah. And Scripture says they were speaking "*of his departure*". Literally, in the Greek, it says they were speaking of his exodus. That's no accident. **Jesus's impending death, resurrection, and ascension was understood by the Gospel writers to be a New Exodus.** He was fulfilling the role of a new Moses who would deliver God's people from a greater enemy and a deeper slavery and a much more terrifying death – eternal death and condemnation.
- ❖ And the way he would deliver is completely unexpected – **Jesus would defeat sin and death by bearing sin and dying.** He would put himself under his enemies to defeat his enemies. That's the beautiful irony of the cross.
  - And that same unexpected kind of deliverance is foreshadowed here in Moses's birth narrative. **Think about how the future Deliverer of Israel ends up being raised in the household of the very enemy who is subjugating and oppressing Israel.** As the story goes, Pharaoh's daughter finds the little ark. In a turn of events, Moses's mother still gets the chance to nurse her son and raise him until he was probably around three years old. And then she brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, and he legally became her son. Israel's future deliverer from Egypt became a prince of Egypt.
    - God was already demonstrating that same sense of irony. **He put his deliverer under his enemies (under their roof!) in order to one day defeat his enemies.** And years later, he would do the same and accomplish an even greater deliverance.
- ❖ Church, the take home is this: **For many of us, we've grown far too familiar and complacent towards the gospel.** These gospel realities no longer elicit the same sense of sorrow or wonder anymore. **We know we're sinners.** But we need the visual of a Hebrew slave being whipped by an Egyptian taskmaster – to realize what sin is actually doing to us.
  - **We know the wages of sin is death.** But we need to picture a Hebrew baby being thrown into a river or the wail of Egyptian parents waking up to find their firstborn dead – to remember the horrors of death and what we deserve outside of Christ.
    - **We know Jesus died for our sins.** But we need a palpable image of a bloody lamb and a blood-stained doorway – so that we never belittle what the Lord sacrificed that we might live and live free.
- ❖ Sometimes the best way to recapture the wonder of the salvation you're experiencing in Christ is to visualize a towering wall of water – that could and should crush you in an instant – if not for a merciful God holding it back with a strong arm, so that you might safely journey home to a promised land of final rest. That's why we read and cherish Exodus.