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Description automatically generatedSession 1: Week 1**

***God of Deliverance***

**Introduction to Exodus**

**15–16 August 2022**

*Jen tries to answer two questions whenever she introduces a Bible book for group study: “Why are we here?” and “Why study this book (in this case, the book of Exodus)?”*

**Why Are We Here? –** Jen doesn’t mean “why do we exist?” We already know from our study of Genesis that our purpose for existence is to glorify God, our Creator. But why are we coming together now to study the book of Exodus? First and foremost, **we want to learn more about who God is.** We know that the Bible is a book about God…but we don’t always read it with that perspective in mind. For example, what is the first name that springs to your mind when you think about the book of Exodus? Moses, right? Yet he isn’t even mentioned in the first chapter of the book. Certainly we will learn a lot about Moses—and several other people—as we read through the text, but Exodus is primarily a book about God and how He relates to His people. So we need to learn how to ask better questions as we move through the book, questions that help us to understand God’s character better. **We are going to have many opportunities in these first 18 chapters of Exodus to develop and cultivate a vision for God high and lifted up.**

**The Goal: Transforming Our Minds –** So we are here to learn more about who God is, but we are not just after *knowledge*: we want to be *changed* by that knowledge. As Romans 12:1 urges, we want to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The study of Exodus will be a real challenge to our *thinking*. It won’t hit us at the feelings level first. Psalm 1:1, 2 reminds us that the righteous person meditates on God’s law day and night. Meditation is a function of the mind, i.e. the one who meditates is thinking about and dwelling on things that are true about God until they have soaked into his very being. Remember that the heart cannot love what the mind does not know.

**Transforming Our Hearts –** So we are here to learn who God is and to be changed by that knowledge *so that we might have rightly ordered emotions before Him*. We will carefully think about what we are studying so that we can respond the way that the writer expects us to. One practice that will be a tremendous help to this process is to take time to read the 18 chapters over and over as we work through this course. This will enable us to not just take Jen’s word for whatever she is teaching, but we will come with firsthand knowledge of the text that will allow us to evaluate what she is saying.

At this point Jen takes time to explain the teaching process she uses, the various kinds of homework questions she asks us to do, etc. I am not including the details of that explanation here since they are all given on pages 7-11 of the study book. You can refer to those pages if you have any questions.

**Why Study Exodus? –** There are several reasons.

1. It provides context that we need for the rest of the Bible. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the “Exodus moment” in the psyche of the Hebrew mind. A comparable moment for us here in the USA today would be 9/11, and the one defining event in the New Testament would be the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The Exodus *is* that moment in the Old Testament. It not only saturates Old Testament writings, but it is all over the New Testament as well. The account of the birth of Christ in Matthew follows the story arc of the Exodus. The book of Hebrews shows us that Jesus is the true and better Moses, so we should expect to see things in the account of Moses’ life that point us toward Christ, the ultimate Deliverer. And traces of this indelible moment are carried through all the way to the end of the Bible.
2. 1 Corinthians 10:6 tells us, “Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.” So *as a Bible student*, you should want to study Exodus because it will help you understand the Bible better. But *as a human being*, you should want to study Exodus because *it will help you remember what God requires of you*. The history of the nation of Israel is one of vast and massive forgetfulness. And that’s our story, too. 1 Corinthians 9:10 tells us that God instructed Moses to write his account for *our* sake. And Romans 15:4 says, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures *we might have hope*.” So Exodus was written for our instruction, for our benefit, for our example, and that we might have hope.

**The “Archaeological Questions” - pages 14-15**

1. **Who wrote the book of Exodus? –** Probably we are all aware that Moses wrote the book. But it is interesting to note that he included his own life story in the third person. For instance, he didn’t begin chapter two with, “And then I was born.” Instead he talks about himself as a child born to a certain couple from the tribe of Levi.

So who was Moses? He was Israel’s law-giver, their deliverer, their prophet and their judge. So he was a spiritual father to the fledgling nation of Israel. He was also an author, writing the first five books of the Old Testament while the Israelites were wandering around in the desert. He wrote their history, both to help them remember where they had come from and to point them toward the future. We can be sure that Moses was the author of these five books because Jesus Himself attributed them to him in Luke 24.

1. **When was it written? –** Exodus was written sometime between 1600 BC and 1400 BC. So that’s roughly 3500 years ago! Yet it is still relevant to the followers of the one true God today.
2. **To whom was it written? –** This book was written to the generation of Israelites who were ready to enter the Promised Land under Joshua’s leadership. Moses knew that he would not be going with them, and he wanted to give them something to help them on the way. He wrote to give them *roots* (“This is who you are and where you came from.”) and to give them *shoots* (“This is where you are going.”) Moses knew that at this point in their lives, the Israelites were sandwiched between polytheistic Egypt and polytheistic Canaan. Over and over again Moses gives his people a message from the ONE true God.

So the book was written to a particular group of people at a particular time in history…but it was also written to *us* who read it today to give us hope, to be an example so we will not forget, and to show us how to live. When it comes to applying the truths we find in scripture, we take a three pronged approach:

* 1. What did it mean to the original audience? What did it say to them and for then?
  2. What does it mean for us and for always? Remember that the book was not written to an individual, but to a people group. So we in the church today, as followers of the one true God, should ask ourselves, “What is the corporate message of this book?” Only after we have done this important task can we go on to the next question:
  3. What does it mean for me and for now?

1. **In what style was it written? –** Exodus was written primarily as historical narrative, so it is meant to be taken as fact. It is history, but history that was written with a particular *agenda*. We need to understand that there really is no such thing as an unbiased account of history. Whenever *anyone* writes an historical account, he/she picks and chooses which incidents to include and which to leave out. The writers of scripture are no different. Moses wanted to drive home the point that there is only one true God, and he selected incidents that would illustrate that point. All writers of scripture want to disciple their readers into a certain way of thinking.

The first 18 chapters of Egypt that we will be studying this fall will take the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt all the way to the foot of Mount Sinai. The remaining chapters will include the giving of the Law, the plans for building the Tabernacle, and then the actual construction and dedication of the Tabernacle.

1. **What is the central theme of the book? –** The central theme for Exodus is that of deliverance. The word “exodus” means “a going out”, and what we are going to find is that the story of the book is a **birth narrative**—not of Moses, but of the nation of Israel. A *family* went into Egypt, and 400 years later a *nation* emerges. We will see God again and again as a central figure in that story and as a very strong Deliverer.

***May God reveal Himself to us in new and bigger ways as we delve into Exodus together.***