**Session 2: Week 2a**

***God of Deliverance***

**Exodus 1:1 – 1:14**

**22-23 August 2022**

**Continuing the Story –** Exodus is a book of history about the nation of Israel which asks and answers some foundational questions. It is directly tied to the book of Genesis; in fact, in the original Hebrew it begins with the word “and…” to indicate that it picks up right where Genesis left off. At the end of Genesis we saw that Joseph was very highly regarded by the Egyptians, and his entire family was honored because of him. The opening chapter of Exodus answers a question that a Hebrew child might well have asked his parents: “So how did the nation of Israel come to be *slaves* in Egypt?”

**Seventy People? –** Moses records that seventy members of Jacob’s family settled in Egypt. “Seventy” may or may not have been the literal total number of people. The Hebrews regarded both 7 and 10 as numbers of completeness, and when combined to form 70 (i.e. 7x10), it would have conveyed to them that Jacob’s entire family went down to Egypt: no one was left behind.

**Fruitfulness and Faithfulness –** In Exodus 1:7 we see five different expressions used to indicate that the Hebrews were fruitful: they *were fruitful*; they *increased greatly*; they *multiplied*; they *grew exceedingly strong* (or numerous); they *filled the land*. This indicates that God was fulfilling the promises He had made to His chosen people throughout the book of Genesis. Moses is telling his hearers, “God is faithful!”

**A New Pharaoh –** Next we encounter the rather ominous statement that a new king came to power in Egypt who “did not know Joseph.” This doesn’t mean that he had never heard of Joseph, but that he did not regard him respectfully and certainly did not think that he owed anything to his memory or that he should honor his family’s descendants. The first statement this new Pharaoh makes in Exodus is an observation about the Israelites’ fruitfulness, and the next is his response to that perceived threat: “*Come, let us* deal shrewdly with them.” This wording is strongly reminiscent of what the builders of the Tower of Babel said in their day, “*Come, let us* build a tower that will reach to the heavens.” God’s response to that arrogant rebellion was to put an end to their building project by confusing their language and scattering them, and we will see that God takes note of Pharaoh’s words as well.

**Pharaoh’s Fear –** Pharaoh feared that the Israelites would “join [Egypt’s] enemies” because of their location within Egypt. The Hebrews lived in the land of Goshen, which was in the northeastern part of Egypt. If the Babylonians or Assyrians ever came down to attack Egypt, they would have to go through the land of Goshen first. Pharaoh feared that the Hebrews would join forces with the attackers and escape from Egypt.

**Shrewdness Backfires –** The word “shrewd” or “shrewdly” reminds us of something else found in Genesis, when the serpent is described in chapter 3 as being shrewd or cunning. So Moses is using that same word in this account in Exodus to show his readers that Pharaoh is now playing the role of the serpent in the lives of God’s people. The order Pharaoh gives the Israelites to build two storage cities for him is intended to scatter them from Goshen, so that they can’t all be together and cause trouble. But the Lord intervenes, and the people just keep multiplying greatly wherever they are, filling even more of Egypt with their offspring.

**Being a Slave in Egypt –** The Bible describes the lives of the Hebrews as being bitter because of the ruthless treatment they received from their Egyptian taskmasters. Historical accounts from Egyptian wisdom literature of that era tell us that slaves that worked the fields were starved, beaten, and forced to watch their families being mistreated and also taken as slaves. Slaves who made bricks were described as filthy and caked with clay mud, with their clothes falling apart from constantly being wet. Such a slave was able to wash “only once a season” and was “simply wretched through and through”. This is what it meant for Pharaoh to “deal shrewdly” with the Israelites, the children of God in Egypt. BUT any time there is a serpent near, we can be sure that the Lord will act, and we will pick up the story next week to see what He does in response to Pharaoh’s ruthless edict.