

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

Before we begin examining the book of Exodus, we need to introduce the book and explore the background leading us into the beginning of the book. As a book of the Bible, I think Exodus is one of the most doubted and abused texts in the Scriptures. Skeptics do not believe the miracles recorded in the book are the result of the supernatural intervention of God into history, and they do not believe Moses authored the book. In other words, these theologians deny the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy relying instead on secular humanist theories to explain the text. They clearly disregard any suggestion that God the Holy Spirit had anything to do with the writing of the Word of God. They speak as though they believe sinful men were solely responsible for the writing of the Scriptures. I would suggest this mindset is produced by the rebellious heart of sinful man and has no place in the hermeneutical system of the serious Bible student. Replacement theology, the concept that the church has replaced Israel, prevents people from understanding God's program with Israel and His supernatural creation, development, and protection of that nation for their part in His plan for history.

We have to keep in mind that the book of Exodus fits into the larger narrative of the entire Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy—otherwise known as the book of the Law. We also need to remember that the Pentateuch factually records actual historical events that are revealed through Moses and are accurately recorded in the Scriptures and are therefore

trustworthy. The events of history as recorded in the Scriptures are the Holy Spirit inspired explanation of those events which serve to reveal God and His plan for history to the world. The Scriptures are called special revelation which serves to advance the general revelation of Creation that is available to all men everywhere. The events of the Exodus are very important as the Scriptures reveal theological truths concerning Israel and God's plan for history.

Exodus provides valuable background information for understanding biblical history, for understanding Judaism and its beginnings, and for understanding Israel's part in God's plan for the history of the world. It is a revelation of the faithfulness of God to uphold His covenant promises. That has never changed and that will never change; God will fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. Time and date markers are not explicitly identified in the book. The names of the Pharaohs are not mentioned.

There is not much specific extra-biblical evidence to support the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and the events of Exodus, however, a papyrus was discovered in 1822 that was written by a man who witnessed the events; his name was Ipuwer. The papyrus is called "Leiden 344" and it is housed in the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, Netherlands. It had degraded over the years and much of it is missing.¹ As we examine the plagues as recorded in Exodus, this papyrus will be examined as well. Most commentators believe there is no extra-biblical evidence for the Exodus which makes this papyrus a very important

¹ J. R. Church, "An Egyptian Description of the Exodus" in *Prophecy in the News* (June 2017), 12-13.

piece of evidence. Some theologians believe the Egyptians left no record of this period of time because who likes to keep records of their own catastrophic failures and defeats? Further, Pharaoh was considered to be a god and how could Pharaoh the god suffer such a humiliating defeat? Egypt and Pharaoh were divine creations meant to be the premier nation and king in the world. How could they possibly be defeated in this way? The pantheon of Egyptian deities was also shown to be powerless in the face of God's power and they wouldn't want to admit that either. Another key piece of evidence may well be the absolute destruction of Egypt and their disappearance as a world power at that time. One could argue that their poverty and generally third world status today is still the legacy of the Exodus. In other words, they never fully recovered and were restored from the devastation and the loss of the nation's wealth.

In Hebrew, the book is entitled וַאֲלֵהֶם שְׂמוֹת, meaning "and these are the names of" or shortened to שְׂמוֹת simply meaning "the names of." The Hebrew title obviously doesn't identify the subject matter of the book. Our English title, Exodus, is the transliteration of the Greek ἔξοδος meaning "going out of" from Exodus 19:1 as the translators of the Septuagint have rendered that verse. It means a going out or a departure so it is an appropriate title for the book. In the New Testament, the word is used only in Hebrews 11:22 where it mentions the Exodus in connection with the bones of Joseph being taken back to Canaan. The grammatical construction of Exodus 1:1 opening with the Hebrew waw consecutive

and translated "now" in English connects this book with what preceded it in Genesis.

What kind of man was Moses? David was said to be a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), but it can fairly be said that Moses was a man after God's own heart as well. Few men were as intimately connected to God than Moses. The Word of God does explicitly say Moses was the man of God.

Deuteronomy 33:1 ¹Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death.

Ezra 3:2 ²Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God.

Moses was also called the servant of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 34:5 ⁵So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

Moses was a prophet of God who was used by God to perform signs and wonders which are the authenticating acts of God's message by and through His messenger. God used Moses to predict the future arrival of the Messiah implying the Jewish people should be looking for Him to come. Moses was privileged to be a man God knew face to face. We know that no sinful man can see God face to face and live so the meaning of this is along the line of thought that Moses had the most direct, intimate contact with God that anyone had and he was privileged to be granted more communication and revelation than

others ever had. Moses had a very personal connection with and knowledge of God and His revelation.

Deuteronomy 18:15 ¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

Deuteronomy 34:10–12 ¹⁰Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, ¹¹for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, ¹²and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Just as God sovereignly provided for the Israelites needs during the Exodus, God kept Moses in excellent health. Moses didn't die of natural causes; God took his life from him. The forfeiture of Moses' life was the result of divine discipline for his disobedience when he struck the rock twice in violation of God's instructions to speak to the rock (Num. 20:8-13) in order to bring forth water. His disobedience cost him the opportunity to enter the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 34:7 ⁷Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.

The disciplinary death of Moses is an object lesson for us; God is no respecter of persons. Moses, as great and godly a man as he was, was a disobedient believer and he suffered divine, temporal discipline for his transgression. Obviously, Moses was a sinful man but that's what God has to work with and he can use us, sinful though we may be, to serve Him and glorify His name in our sphere of influence just as He used Moses and just as he has used other imperfect, sinful people throughout history. None of us is Moses, but all of us can be used by God.

Moses is clearly the author of the book and this is confirmed by at least two biblical witnesses: Joshua and Christ Jesus. Joshua wrote his book just a few years after the death of Moses and the Israelites entry into the land. If Joshua, who personally knew Moses on a very personal basis, claims Moses wrote the book of the Law, who are we to argue with that 3,500 years later?

Joshua 8:30–35 ³⁰Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, ³¹just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. ³²He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. ³³All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. ³⁴Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. ³⁵There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.

The entire Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Bible are collectively called the Law referring to the Law of Moses. In Jewish theology, there has never been a time when the Pentateuch, all five books, was not referred to as the Law of Moses or simply as the Law. Exodus is part of that and Joshua presented the earliest evidence for Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

The Lord also referred to the Law of Moses and to the fact Moses wrote the Pentateuch. The Lord specifically referred to Moses as the author of Exodus in Mark 12:26 by referring to the burning bush revealed in Exodus 3:2, 15. The

Lord also made the same reference to the burning bush as recorded in Luke 20:37.

Mark 12:26 ²⁶“But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush [Ex. 3:2, 15], how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, and the God of Jacob’?

Luke 20:37 ³⁷“But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB.

If the Lord explicitly said He spoke to Moses and those words are recorded by Moses in the book of the Law and later confirmed by the Messiah, by what right do theologians have today to say Moses didn't write the Pentateuch? Making that claim is perilously close to claiming Christ Jesus is ignorant of the facts, mistaken about the facts, or dishonest. That's not a place we should be going in terms of studying the Word of God.

In the Gospels, the Lord many times referred to the Law of Moses which is a confirmation of Mosaic authorship. A number of times the Lord used the name of Moses as a synonym for the Law. In other words, He referred to Moses and the Prophets rather than referring to the Law of Moses and the Prophets. In John 7:19, He specifically said Moses gave them the Law, which, as we have seen, includes the book of Exodus. The Lord also specifically said that Moses wrote about Him in John 5:46-47.

Luke 16:29, 31 ²⁹“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’... ³¹“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

John 7:19 ¹⁹“Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”

John 5:46–47 ⁴⁶“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷“But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

There is absolutely no denying that the Jews in totality as a nation and as a people, the apostles, and the Lord all acknowledged Moses to be the author of the Law. It is a biblically asserted and it is an undeniable truth claim. They never defend Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; they simply present it as fact, deeply ingrained into their thinking, their culture, and their religion.

At the end of the book of Deuteronomy, it was written that Moses completed writing the book of the Law.

Deuteronomy 31:24 ²⁴It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete,

A number of other times the book of Exodus itself records the fact that Moses wrote it; therefore, the book is internally consistent when it verifies Moses as the author. It is obvious that Moses was writing parts of the Pentateuch as the Exodus was in progress.

Exodus 17:14 ¹⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

Exodus 34:27 ²⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

The only substantial part of the Pentateuch not written by Moses was his obituary in Deuteronomy 34. Most theologians believe Joshua wrote that part of

the book although that Scripture may have been added much later. A few historical details were also added to the text at a later time.

Exodus was written in such a way that it had to have been written by a highly educated man very familiar with Egypt. We know that Moses fit that role because he was a very educated man who completely understood the Egyptian government and culture and was uniquely qualified to write about it.

Acts 7:22²² "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

The book was also written such that it indicated the author was a witness to the events being described. The detail is too minute and too exact to be the product of men writing hundreds of years after the fact from other places. For example:

Exodus 15:27²⁷ Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

While it is possible some person hundreds of years later in a faraway place might know this location at Elim has twelve springs, it is highly unlikely the exact number of trees would remain the same over such a long period of time and remain known. But even at that, springs can stop flowing or be destroyed by an enemy thereby obliterating any chances for people living hundreds of years later to know of them. The author was also familiar with the geographical characteristics of Egypt and the Sinai.

Beware of commentaries that claim numerous authors over hundreds of years wrote the book of Exodus. The Word Biblical Commentary is one example.

The author wrote, "The process by which the Book of Exodus came to its canonical form began as early as the time of Moses and continued at least into the third century B. C.; it is exceedingly complex and can only be surmised. The end result of that process is at last our one certainty, for we have it at hand."² This theologian claims the book was being written over a period of about 1,200 years. How does that claim square with the words of Joshua and Christ our Lord that we just examined? How does that claim square with the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God? It doesn't and you have to be very careful about reading commentaries that make this claim which many, if not almost all of them, do.

Many theologians, including the author of the Word Bible Commentary is just referenced, also embrace to varying degrees the different forms of higher criticism all of which deny the inspiration of the Scriptures. Probably the most famous theory of higher criticism is the JEDP or JEDPR source theory known as Graf-Wellhausen which is based on Darwin's theory of evolution and the philosophy of Hegel. This theory claims the Pentateuch was written over a long period of time by different authors. The theory claims the authors, plural, didn't write the book themselves but instead used other written, unknown sources to compile the biblical account. The J author used an early document containing the name Jehovah, the E author wrote much later from the Northern Kingdom using

² John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), xxi.

a document containing the name Elohim, the D author was a source also written later and claimed to be the High Priest Hilkiah and it was combined with J and E by yet another person called a redactor, the R author, and the P author was priest claimed to have been written post-exile by Ezra and Ezekiel.³ There is no proof for any of this; it is simply made up and it obliterates the doctrine of inspiration. Beware those who embrace higher criticism of the text; they are denying the literal truth and the revelatory nature of the book. This isn't to say conservative Bible students and theologians haven't fought back against higher criticism, but any examination of Old Testament commentaries proves that much of this has become mainstream theological thought which is a tragedy; it leads people away from the truth and not to it. Many of the various higher criticism theories are based on rationalistic human thought and on the denial of the supernatural in favor of so-called science. When these theories are closely examined, it becomes very clear that many of these theologians were/are unbelievers. This is a huge problem concerning God's execution of the miraculous plagues on Egypt in the book of Exodus; they deny them and attempt to explain them using rationalistic thought.

The Exodus is dated to about 1446-1440 B.C. although that is disputed by some theologians who hold to a later date of 1290 B.C. The earlier date seems to be confirmed by the Bible itself and I will operate from that date.

³ Herbert Wolfe, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1991), 76-78.

In Judges, Jephthah, who lived about 1100 B.C., said the conquest of the land took place about three hundred years before his time, placing that at about 1400 B.C. Add the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the early date of the Exodus is confirmed at about 1440 B.C.

Judges 11:26 ²⁶While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?

The author of Kings wrote that the Exodus occurred 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon's reign placing the departure from Egypt at about 1445 B.C.

1 Kings 6:1 ¹Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

In order to properly understand the events of the Exodus, we need to go back to Genesis and get some foundational information. This will be brief, it is not my intention to exegete the Genesis story of Israel and Joseph, but we do need to have this background information in mind as we study the Exodus.

God has a plan for history and His plan will not be thwarted. The plan will be worked out through Israel and the church, but the church is an intercalation, a period of time inserted into God's historical timeline dealing with Israel. Israel has been temporarily set aside and God is now using the church as the means to advance His plan for world history. Once the church's role is finished, the true Church will be removed from its physical presence in the world and God will turn

His attention back to Israel and her role in the culmination of and purpose for human history which is the Messianic Kingdom.

Israel is not a nation that God chose out of all the other nations of the world to uniquely be His people. In Genesis 10, Israel is not included in the table of nations because Israel did not yet exist. Instead of choosing an existing people group or nation to be His people and nation, God specifically created Israel to be the people through whom He would reveal Himself to the world over and above the revelation inherent within the Creation. God sovereignly intervened in the lives of Abram and Sarai (Gen. 18:1-15, 21:1-8), who was barren, in order to give birth to Isaac and begin the formation of Israel both as a people and as a nation.

Genesis 11:30³⁰Sarai was barren [עֲקָרָה]; she had no child.

The word barren is עֲקָרָה, and it means infertile, sterile, or barren meaning Sarai was sexually infertile and incapable of bearing children. This was also the situation in which Rebekah and Rachel later found themselves. The word carries the specific meaning these women were not physically capable of getting pregnant. In other words, it wasn't just a problem of not getting pregnant; it was a problem of being physiologically unable to get pregnant. It was only by means of divine intervention in the lives of these Patriarchs that the nation began to be formed with the birth of Isaac and that followed by Jacob. Without that divine intervention, there would have been no nation. Not only had Sarah been barren during her child bearing years, but at the time of her pregnancy

she was far past menopause and her child bearing possibilities had long ago ceased beyond all physiological possibility. There is no doubt Isaac's birth is a divinely ordained, miraculous act accomplished in space and time.

Genesis 18:11 ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.

Rebekah was also barren and it took divine intervention in the lives of Isaac and Rebekah to bear Jacob who later became known as Israel (Gen. 32:28). God also sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau to be the line through whom the nation would be born (Gen. 25:22-26).

Genesis 25:21 ²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren [עָקָר]; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Finally, Rachel was barren and it took divine intervention in her life to bring about the birth of Joseph (Gen. 30:22) who would be the instrument through whom God would choose to forge the family Israel into the nation Israel.

Genesis 29:31 ³¹Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren [עָקָר].

In terms of understanding the Exodus, we will see that God was forming this small family band he created in Canaan to be a nation formed in Egypt and then brought back into the land of Canaan God promised to Abraham.

At the time of the ratification of the Abrahamic Covenant, God told Abram that his descendants would be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years, but at the end of it they would be brought back to the land. At the time, the nation of oppression was not identified as Egypt. When the family went into

Egypt at Joseph's behest to escape the famine, they had no idea God's prophecy made to Abram years before was beginning to be fulfilled.

Genesis 15:12–16 ¹²Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴“But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ¹⁵“As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶“Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

Later, the Lord told Jacob that he should not fear going into Egypt because He was going to forge Israel into a great nation there.

Genesis 46:3 ³He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.”

We do not subscribe to a hard determinist view of God, that is, we don't believe God has determined every minute detail of life for every person from eternity past. We believe people freely make decisions and God uses that to advance His purposes for history. At the same time, however, there are things that God does at select times and in particular places throughout history to specifically advance His will. The creation of Israel as a people and a nation, the circumstances that put Joseph into Egypt, the favor Joseph found there, the famine that got Jacob and his family into Egypt, and the Exodus out of Egypt brought about by God's miraculous intervention in time and space, are all specific actions of God in history in order to bring about the results He desired for Israel.

Joseph's brothers, jealous about Joseph's relationship with their father, and annoyed by what they thought were his arrogant dreams, concocted a hasty plot to kill him. Reuben, the first-born son of Jacob, rescued him with the intent of returning him to his father. Judah, in Reuben's absence, kept his brothers from killing Joseph but instead suggested they make money off him by selling him into the Egyptian slave trade through some Midianite traders.

Genesis 37:25–28, 36 ²⁵Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. ²⁶Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷"Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. ²⁸Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.... ³⁶Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

In Egypt, Joseph was blessed by God and he prospered. God revealed Pharaoh's dream concerning a famine to Joseph (Gen. 41:14-37). As a result of Joseph's God-given ability to interpret the dream for Pharaoh, he was ultimately elevated to a very high government position; so high, he was second in command only to Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:39–44 ³⁹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰"You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." ⁴¹Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴²Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over

all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

Joseph began preparing the Egyptian people and the land for the famine to come. That laid the groundwork for the eventual reunification of Joseph with his family. The famine in Canaan drove Jacob to seek sustenance in Egypt where they did, in fact, find food, shelter, and safety. Genesis chapters 42-45 reveal the facts of the family's sojourn into Egypt to obtain food and Joseph's dealing with his brothers. Chapter 46 reveals the move to Egypt including Jacob. The family settled in Goshen (Gen. 47:6) and became productive and increased in population. Exodus 1:7 will point back to these Scriptures linking the Genesis narrative with the Exodus narrative.

Genesis 47:27 ²⁷Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous.

From our vantage point, we can see that God has sovereignly directed and guided the family to survive, to prosper, and to begin to develop the population necessary for the establishment of the nation and their subsequent relocation back to Canaan. Joseph recognized the divine hand of God in this situation.

Genesis 50:20 ²⁰"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

In Exodus, many aspects or attributes of God are revealed to the Israelites and through them to the world. God's faithfulness to those people who belong to Him and His righteous character compels Him to keep the promises He made to them. This should be a truth of monumental importance to believers through

the centuries. If God is not faithful to do to, with, and for the Patriarchs, their descendants, and their nation all He promised to do, then on what basis do we live life expecting Him to keep His promise of eternal life to all who believe in Christ Jesus? The character of God as displayed in Exodus is of the utmost importance to us and it should allow us to live dynamic, productive Christian lives because we know He is a faithful, promise keeping God.

Obviously, one important element of the book of Exodus is God's sovereignty and omnipotence. He is the Creator God and He is Lord over His Creation. As Lord of Creation, He can circumvent and/or use according to His will all of the natural elements of the created order. He is not subject to them; they are subject to Him. As we will see, this is very hard for people with a humanistic, rationalistic, anti-supernatural mindset to accept. It is almost impossible for those with that worldview to believe there is a Creator God who is outside the sphere of the creation and who is not bound by it. As a result, they reject even the possibility of any supernatural intervention by Him into our historical setting. The deliverance of the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery is a supernatural event in world history. His divine provision for them during their sojourn in the wilderness and His protection of them from hostile nations during their travels are exercises in divine omnipotence as well as divine love.

Yahweh is put on full display as the only true God in existence. All of the plagues and judgments Egypt experienced at the hands of God were direct as-

saults on the false gods that particular pagan people worshiped. Their gods were helpless and worthless in face of God Almighty.

Passover is instituted in Exodus which in the context of the book protected the firstborn sons of the Israelites from death and which now, when observed, serves to remind the Israelites of their redemption from Egyptian slavery and the eventual establishment of Israel as a nation. It is an observance commanded by God to be observed by the Jewish people on a perpetual basis.

Exodus 12:24–27 ²⁴“And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. ²⁵“When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. ²⁶“And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ ²⁷you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’” And the people bowed low and worshiped.

For Christians, Passover is a picture of the work of Christ on behalf of mankind. For us this is expressed through what we call the Lord's Supper. In John 1:29, Christ is called “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” and in 1 Corinthians 5:7 He is called “our Passover” who has been sacrificed.

The beginnings of the institution of Judaism as a religion is chronicled in Exodus. The giving of the Law and the building of the Tabernacle, the precursor to the Temple, is described. The Tabernacle was a reminder that God was dwelling with the Israelites.

Exodus 25:8 ⁸“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.

And God did dwell with them until just before the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. Ezekiel recorded His departure from the Holy of Holies and out of Jerusalem (Ezek. 10:1-19). His presence will not be manifest among them again until Christ Jesus returns to assume the throne of David.

Exodus also reveals the stubborn rebellious heart of not only the Israelites but by extension mankind. Israel's whining and complaining during their journey and immediately after their amazing redemption out of Egypt culminated in an idolatrous display of debauchery at Mount Sinai. All of this was after they saw the mighty, miraculous works of God exercised on their behalf. We are no different.

One of the most unfortunate applications of Exodus in terms of modern theology is the concept of Liberation Theology initiated by liberal Roman Catholic theologians. It has since spread to other groups, but that's where it started. They claim Exodus is an example of the liberation of poor and oppressed people throughout history so they use the Bible, particularly the book of Exodus, to claim that some form of social and/or political revolution is the Christian solution to poverty and oppression. They consider capitalism to be the enemy of the people and Liberation Theology is heavily Marxist in its orientation; it is essentially Marxism disguised as Christianity. Marx, of course, was an atheist who thought religion was the opiate of the people so he is hardly one that professing Christians ought to emulate but they do. Whatever all this is, it is not Christian and it is neither an appropriate interpretation nor an appropriate application of the

book of Exodus as it relates to Christianity. Certainly, the Bible identifies appropriate ways to treat and to govern people, but putting them into a liberal, Marxist, Liberation Theology framework is not the correct way to go about interpreting the book. Exodus is not a biblical manifesto mandating revolution or revolt. Exodus is revealing a special, one-time event in which God is accomplishing the specific task of forming the Israelites into His specially created nation. That was never done before and it will never be done again. Trying to make this situation something that applies to all people throughout history is a misuse of biblical revelation. This is a common error and there is a hermeneutical lesson in this situation. We have to recognize there are some activities of God that are specific to time, place, and people that are not for all people for all time. We can learn from them, but we can't always appropriate them as universally applicable situations throughout history.

There is some interesting background information concerning the identity of Pharaoh's daughter who plucked Moses out of the Nile River and the identities of the kings who ruled during Moses' early life, his forty-year exile, and the one who refused to let the people go. I'm operating with the understanding the early date of about 1446-1440 B.C. for the Exodus is the correct dating.

Pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty

Amosis	1570-1546	Probably the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.
Amenhotep I	1546-1526	Moses' birth ca. 1526.
Thutmose I	1526-1512	Ordered the murder of male Hebrew children.
Thutmose II	1512-1504	
Hatshepsut	1503-1483	Co-regent with Thutmose III until her death. Possibly rescued and raised Moses.

Thutmose III	1504-1450	Moses in Midian.
Amenhotep II	1450-1425	Pharaoh of the Exodus (ca. 1446-1440).
Thutmose IV	1425-1417	Not the eldest son; not the expected heir.

Keep in mind, this information is based on an investigation of the facts as we know them, but there is an element of uncertainty because we do not have complete historical records for that time in history. In other words, there is not unanimous consensus concerning this issue. For a century and a half or so, a Semitic people called the Hyksos ruled Egypt. An Egyptian king named Amosis expelled them from the country and he may be the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph. That doesn't mean he didn't know Joseph's identity and his historical relevance in Egyptian history; it meant he didn't care and possibly he was wary of another Semitic group, the Israelites, still in his country that could ally with the Hyksos people he just defeated, if they returned attacked again in the future. Probably Amosis or possibly his successor Amenhotep I made the Hebrews the Egyptian slave labor force. As time went on and the Hebrew population continued to grow, the command for the midwives to murder the newborn male Hebrew children was issued, and upon the failure of that program it was followed by the decree to murder all the male children. This was probably the command of Thutmose I. Dr. Merrill believes Moses was born the year of Amenhotep I's death (1526 B.C.).⁴ Thutmose II married his half-sister Hatshepsut. He died young but while still living he named his son Thutmose III, born of another woman, his successor who eventually became a very successful Pharaoh. But because

⁴ Summarized from Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 74-80.

Thutmose III was so young, two years old, his step-mother, Hatshepsut, acted as his co-regent for just over two decades until her death. She is considered by Egyptologists to have been a Queen Pharaoh. It is quite possible she was of the right age at the right time to be the princess who rescued Moses from the Nile River and raised him in Pharaoh's court. Thutmose III was younger than Moses but he would have known him in the royal court and he almost certainly would have viewed him as a rival for the throne in light of the relationship Moses enjoyed with the step-mother of Thutmose III. This could explain why Moses had to flee. Men in Pharaoh's court would hardly be prosecuted for killing anyone, Egyptian or otherwise; they were considered to be god after all, but Thutmose III could have used that murder as an excuse to rid himself of what he probably thought to be a serious rival to the throne. Therefore, fearing for his life, Moses fled Egypt to Midian. Thutmose III lived long enough to be the Pharaoh who ruled for the forty years Moses was in Midian. We know that those who wanted Moses dead had themselves passed away so that he could return to Egypt.

Exodus 4:19 ¹⁹Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."

Thutmose III was succeeded by Amenhotep II who, in this scenario, would have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus. While most Pharaohs lived at Thebes in the south, this Pharaoh lived in Memphis very close to the Goshen home of the Israelites which would have afforded ready access to this king by Moses and Aaron. Thutmose IV succeeded this Pharaoh but it is very interesting to note he was not

the oldest son and expected heir to the throne. Could the eldest son of Amenhotep II be the Pharaoh's son who suffered the deadly impact of the last plague? If Thutmose IV were the rightful heir of the throne, there would have been no need for him to declare his right to the throne, but he did just that. Archaeologists have discovered what is called the "Dream Stela" upon which Thutmose IV has the story told that he was told by a god that he would one day be the king. One thing we do know is the Pharaoh of the Exodus lost his eldest son.

Exodus 12:29 ²⁹Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle.

Dennis Waltemeyer
Fredericksburg Bible Church