

LECTURE 3
EXODUS OVERVIEW
REDEMPTION OF A COVENANT PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

1. Name

2. Theme

3. Purpose

To affirm the divine authority of Moses' leadership and of covenant law and worship regulations.¹

4. Key verses

5. Key truths

- The Lord authorized Moses as Israel's leader to bring the blessing of deliverance from Egypt.
- The covenant laws given by Moses were divinely authorized to lead to blessings for God's people.
- Moses and regulations for worship at the Tabernacle were divinely ordained to lead to blessings for God's people.²

I. AUTHOR

II. DATE

Although the book stretches from the time of Israel's bondage in Egypt to their receiving God's law at Mount Sinai there are hints that the book reached its final form at a later date.

You will remember that we could not be sure if Genesis was addressed to the 1st or 2nd generation of Israel which came out of Egypt. But, in Exodus, two verses hint at the later date for the composition.

And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan (Ex.16:35).

Moses knew they had eaten manna for 40 years. This takes them to the Plains of Moab on the border of the Promised Land and so indicates that the book was written later in the wilderness wanderings.

The other important verse is:

For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys (Ex.40:38).

¹ *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 97

² *Ibid.*, 97.

This suggests that the travels had ended, or were near the end, by the time of the writing of this book. So we assume that it was written primarily to the second generation of Israel which came out of Egypt and were now on the border of Canaan.

The date for writing would then be between 1446-1406 BC and more likely to be nearer 1406 BC.

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

1. Chronology

There is a rather complicated debate between advocates of an “early” Exodus (1446 BC) and those who argue for a later date (1236 BC). It is very tempting to ignore this debate and simply to move on to “better things.” However, the dating of the Exodus has important consequences.

The data of the Exodus is crucial not only because the exodus itself is so central a historical and theological event, but also because our interpretation of both antecedent and subsequent history will be greatly affected by the date we assign to the Exodus.³

The two main options are an “early” date of 1446 BC or a “later” date of around 1275 BC. Below you will find an assimilation of the Biblical evidence and Egyptian chronology which supports the “early” Exodus.

1900 BC	Hyksos begin to invade Northern Egypt
1876 BC	Jacob and family enter Egypt
1859 BC	Jacob died
1805 BC	Joseph died
1730 BC	Hyksos control Egypt with new Hyksos Pharaoh who did not know Joseph (Ex.1:8)
1729 BC	Hyksos compel the Israelites to work at Pithom and Rameses (Ex.1:11)
1570 BC	Egyptians under Amosis drive out Hyksos
1546-1526 BC	Amenhotep I reigns and anti-foreign sentiment grows
1526-1512 BC	Thutmose I reigns and anti-foreign sentiment turns against the Hebrews (Ex.1:15-22)
1527 BC	Moses born (Ex.2:1)
1512-1504 BC	Thutmose II reigned
1504-1450 BC	Thutmose III reigned
1486 BC	Moses fled Egypt to Midian (Ex.2:15-22; Acts 7:23)
1450-1425 BC	Amunhotep II ruled
1448 BC	Moses returned to Egypt (Ex.5:1)
1446 BC	Exodus during reign of Amunhotep II (Exodus 13)
1444 BC	Tabernacle completed
1425-1417 BC	Thutmose IV reigned
1318-1304 BC	Seti I reigned
1279-1236 BC	Rameses II on throne
1275 BC	Alleged date for later Exodus

³ E Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 67.

What are the supporting arguments in favour of such a sequence of events.

a. 1 Kings 6:1

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD (1Kings 6:1).

b. Judges 11:26

While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover them within that time? (Judges 11:26).

c. Exodus 1:11

This states that the Israelites built the city of Rameses. Advocates of a late Exodus argue that this city was named after Rameses II who reigned 1279 BC to 1236 BC. This would appear to support an Exodus around 1275 BC. However, Genesis 47:11 suggests that the name "Rameses" was used long before this. Albright has shown that the Ramessides could be traced back to Hyksos ancestry in the 1700's. Some evangelical scholars have argued that minor inspired revisions were made to Exodus in later years, including the possibility of giving cities the name at the time of writing rather than at the time of the events themselves.

Furthermore, the Bible indicates that much time passed between the building of the cities and the Exodus itself. The Israelites were forced to work on the project, but the more the Egyptians mistreated them, the more they multiplied and filled the land. There is clearly the impression of generation following generation. Furthermore when all else failed, the Pharaoh killed the children, an event which must be dated at the time of Moses birth. Another 80 years passed before the Exodus. If Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus and the city of Rameses was named for him, his reign included these years of construction, the years between the building of the cities and the child-murder decree, and the first 80 years of Moses' life. A total of well over 100 years is clearly in view which is impossible.

d. Exodus 2:23

This verse states that at the end of Moses' sojourn in Midian the king of Egypt died. This clearly suggests that it was the same Pharaoh who had earlier sought Moses' life. Of all the rulers only Thutmose III survived long enough to qualify. This fits an "early" Exodus date. However, the only Pharaoh who lived long enough around the time of the "late" Exodus was Rameses II. If it was Rameses II death that brought Moses back to Egypt the Exodus would have had to have taken place after 1236 BC which no one accepts.

e. Mernepta's stela

The 13th century Pharaoh, Mernepta, wrote about "the people of Israel" as inhabitants of Palestine. Since he mentioned them by name, it would suggest that the Israelites must have been there for an extended period of time. The 1275 BC approach does not leave enough time for Israel to be recognized by Egypt in this way. However, late date advocates claim that the wording of the stela calls Israel a "people," which contrasts with how it describes established territorial city-states. They say that this shows Israel was a relative newcomer to the area and so the date fits the 1275 BC approach.

f. Archaeology

Archaeologists used to argue that the trans-Jordan had no sedentary populations between 1900 and 1300 BC. The references to settled peoples encountered by Moses and Joshua necessitated a date after 1300 BC for the wilderness journeys. It follows that the Exodus also could not have been much earlier than that date. However more recent scientific excavations have found that many of the places integral to the Moses and Joshua stories were populated and powerful in 1400 BC.

Another common argument in support of a 1275 BC date for the exodus is archaeological evidence of a massive and widespread devastation of the cities and towns of central Canaan during that period.

Archaeologists argue that the only thing that can account for this is the Israelite conquest of Canaan. In addition to this is the lack of evidence of an early 14th century conquest. However there is no archaeological sign of an early 14th century conquest precisely because the Canaanite cities and towns were, with few exceptions, spared material destruction as a matter of policy. In other words, signs of major devastation in the period 1400 to 1375 would be an acute embarrassment to the traditional view because the Biblical witness is univocal that Israel was commanded to annihilate the Canaanite populations, but to spare the cities and towns in which they lived. And the records explicitly testify that this mandate was faithfully carried out.⁴

The destruction of the Canaanite cities of the 13th century can be accounted for in this way. The Book of Judges makes it very clear that Israel was over-run time and time again by enemy peoples both from within and outside the land. At no time was this more devastating to Israelite life than in the 13th century.

In conclusion, the archaeological arguments that some take to lead inexorably toward a late date of the Exodus are questionable or wrong. If Bimson's critical work does anything, it leads to a better perspective on archaeological results. They are not brute facts with which the biblical material must conform and that can prove or disprove the Bible. Archaeology rather produces evidence that, like the Bible, must be interpreted.⁵

The archaeological evidence may be harmonized with the most natural reading of biblical texts that describe a fifteenth-century Exodus and conquest.

2. Length of the Sojourn (Exodus 12:40)

This verse states that the sojourn totaled 430 years from the migration of Jacob's family until the Exodus itself. However, the Septuagint version of this verse reads that the 430 years included the sojourn of Abraham and his descendants in Canaan as well as Egypt. This would result in an Egyptian sojourn of about 215 years, and would bring Joseph's career into the Hyksos period. As noted in the previous lectures in Genesis this is very unlikely. Further arguments that may be used against this position are:

a. Abraham was told that after oppression in a foreign land, his descendants would return to Canaan "in the fourth generation" (Gen.15:16). This follows shortly after verse 13, which states that the foreign oppressors "shall afflict them four hundred years." At Abraham's time it seems that a generation was computed at one hundred years, and this was appropriate enough in view of the fact that Abraham was precisely one hundred when he became the father of Isaac. At least four centuries, then, and not a mere 215 years, would mark the Israelite Sojourn in the foreign land.

⁴ E Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 73.

⁵ R Dillard and T Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 60-62.

b. Although in Exodus 6 many of the family lines of prominent figures in the Exodus generation are indicated by only three or four links, there are some which feature as many as ten generations. In the Ancient Near East it was common to miss out some genealogical links. Later biblical genealogies of the same period are fuller and would support the 400 year sojourn.

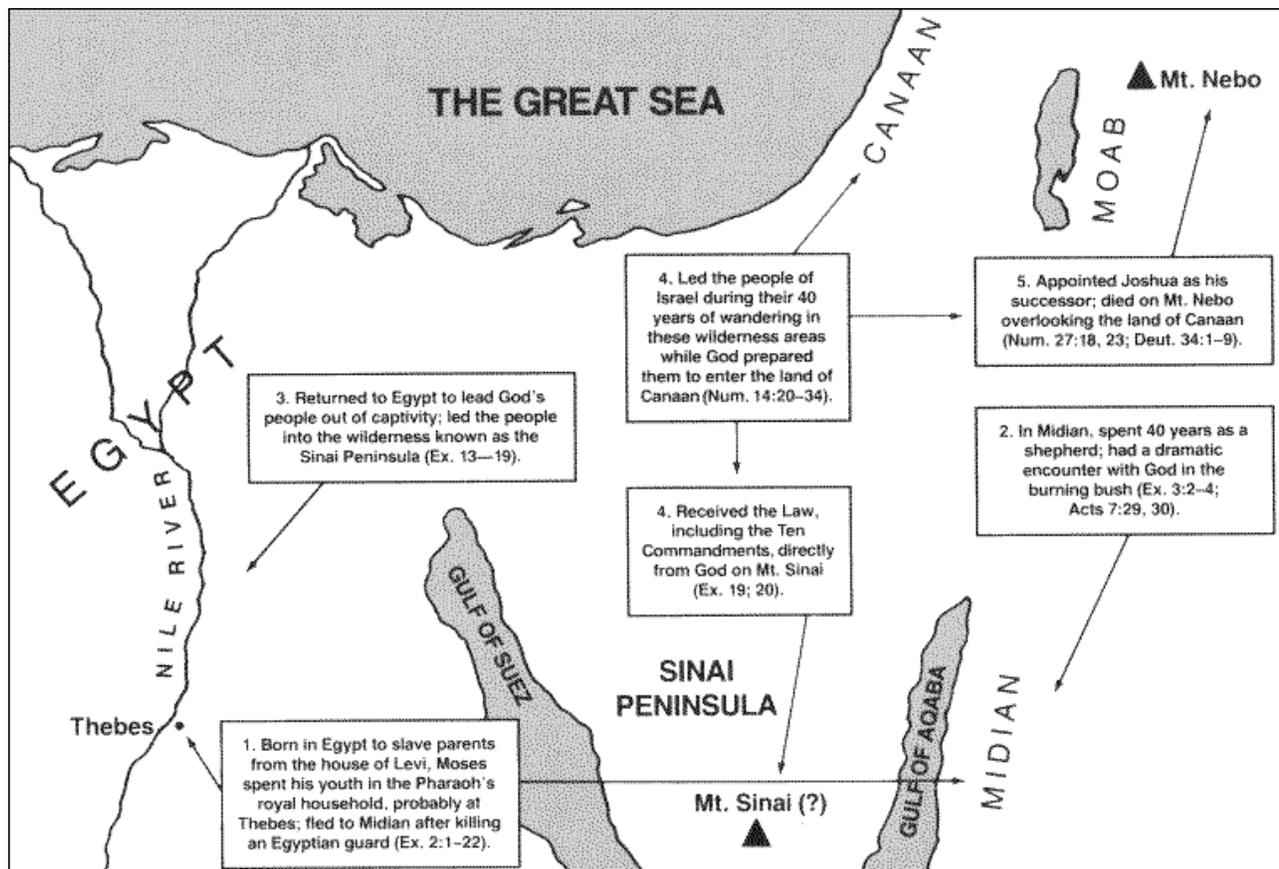
c. The increase from seventy or seventy-five persons in the immigrant family of Jacob to a nation of more than two million souls makes a mere 215-year sojourn unlikely. If there were indeed only four generations then the rate of multiplication would have been “astronomic.”

We conclude that the notion of a longer sojourn is to be preferred. It best accommodates the biblical chronological requirements, and it suits the Egyptian historical background in a much more satisfactory way as well.⁶

3. Geography

The Book of Exodus describes Israel's troubles and travels under the direction of God, from Egypt through the desert to the foot of Mount Sinai. So the book has a geographical arrangement.

- Israel in Egypt (1:1-12:36)
- Israel in the desert (12:37-18:27)
- Israel at Mount Sinai (19-40).



Though the general route of the Exodus is known, opinions differ as to the exact location of the crossing of the Red Sea, the exact location of the encampment in the Sinai mountains, the direction of the journey around the land of Edom. These differences of opinion exist partly because the locations of various places mentioned in the

⁶ E Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 78.

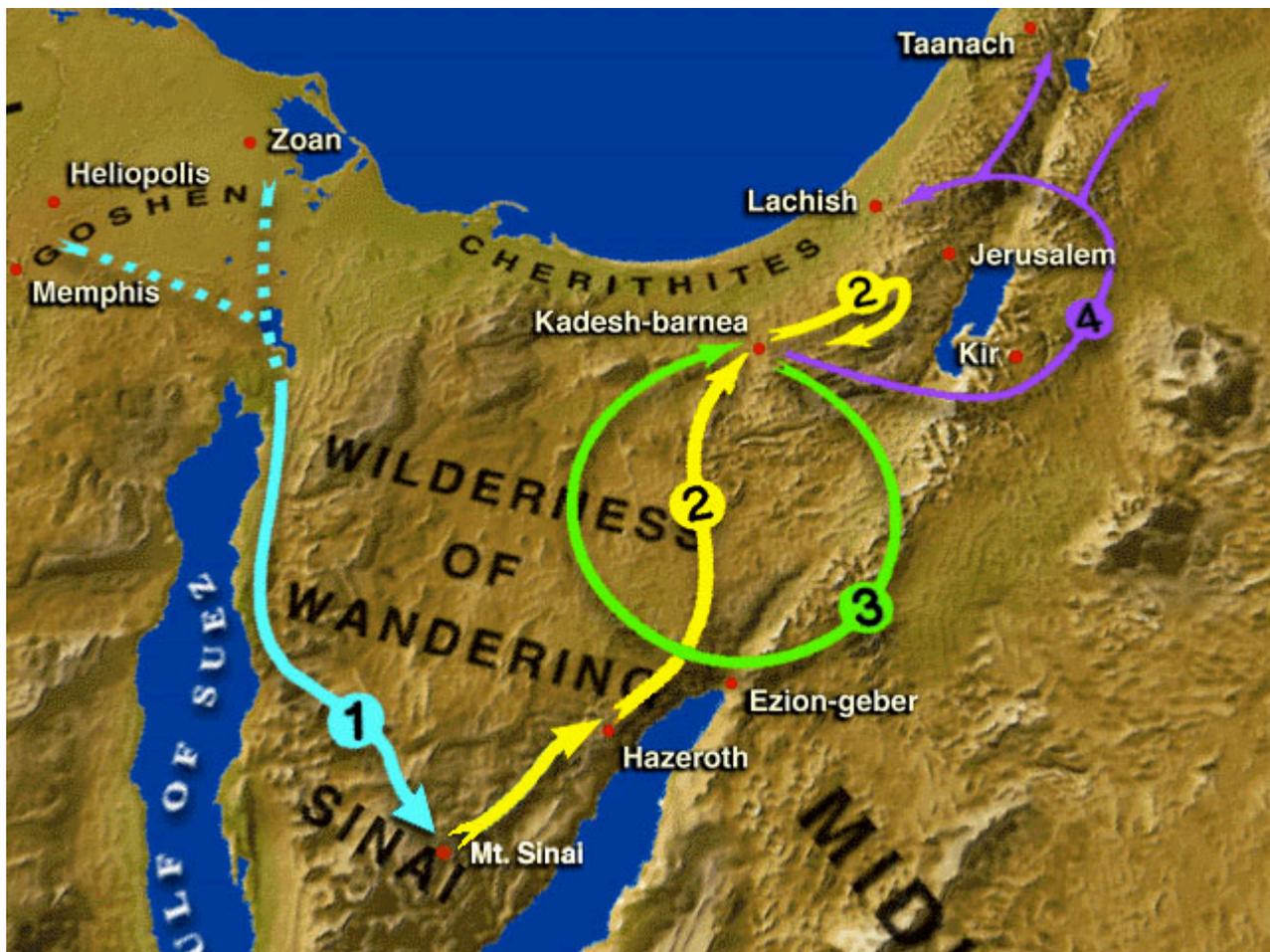
⁷ *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps and charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Electronic Edition.

Bible are not now known, and, in the case of the Red Sea, because the sea is thought to have extended farther northward in the time of the Exodus than it does at the present time.

The sea that has been known as the Red Sea since the days of the Septuagint is actually the “Sea of Reeds” in Hebrew. Presumably the body of water Israel miraculously crossed is one of the freshwater lakes of the Nile delta where such reeds were found once across the sea. Once across the sea and out of Egypt there were three basic options for the trek across the Sinai peninsular: northern, central, or southern routes. Advocates of the southern route usually accept the identification of Mount Sinai with the Jebel Musa, the mount of Moses where today there is a monastery and a basilica. However the rugged granite mountains of the Sinai peninsular offer several other possibilities for the mountain of God.

The Israelites often gave names to places in the desert as they passed through the area. But without a continuous population in the region to carry on the traditional names, we are unable to identify locations precisely. Furthermore, the Israelites lived a nomadic lifestyle during these years in the desert. Their tents, animal skin clothing, and containers would leave behind few artifacts for modern archaeologists to discover. As a result we have no specific information on the route, and are unlikely to acquire any soon. However the traditional southern route answers more questions than the other.⁸

The geography of the Pentateuch, then, may be represented as follows:



⁸ B Arnold and B Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 108-110.

⁹ *Logos Bible Maps*, Electronic Edition.

- (1) Upon their release, the Israelites departed from the Land of Goshen, miraculously crossed the Red Sea and arrived at Sinai.
- (2) Departing from Sinai, they followed a route northward to Kadesh–barnea which ended in the disastrous attempt to invade Canaan without God’s assistance.
- (3) The next 40 years were spent wandering in the wilderness, an area generally believed to have included Moses’ previous homeland of Midian.
- (4) Under God’s direction, the Israelites successfully advanced into Canaan, first capturing the lands east of Jordan before invading into Palestine.

4. The most important Old Testament event

IV. LITERARY ANALYSIS

1. Comparative Outlines

The outline is determined by the criteria used. Different criteria result in different structure. Durham is geographical, Casutto is more thematic.

Durham	Cassuto	Pratt
Israel in Egypt (1:1-13:16)	Bondage and Liberation (1:1-17:16)	God’s Deliverance Led by Moses (1:1-18:27)
Israel in wilderness (13:17-18:27)	Torah and its precepts (18:1-24:18)	God’s Covenant Law Mediated by Moses (19:1-24:18)
Israel at Sinai (19:1-40:38)	Tabernacle and its Service (25:1-40:38)	God’s Tabernacle Erected by Moses (25:1-40:38)

The following structural suggestions are made by J E Smith.

CONFRONTATION IN EGYPT	CONSECRATION AT SINAI	CONSTRUCTION OF TABERNACLE
Persecution chs. 1–6	Commandments	Designed chs. 25–31
Plagues chs. 7–12	Judgments	Delayed chs. 32–34
Pilgrimage		Dedicated

chs. 13–19	Ordinances	chs. 35–40
EXODUS 1–19	EXODUS 20–24	EXODUS 25–40
GOD'S POWER	GOD'S PRECEPTS	GOD'S PRESENCE

The Book of Exodus can be summarized in the caption 'Plagues and Precepts'. The first half of the book concentrates on the plagues which resulted in the release of God's people. The latter half of the book contains the precepts by which God governed his people.¹⁰

2. Original Message

3. Genre

a. Theological History

b. Narrative and Law

c. Other Genres

Other genres found in Exodus are song (ch. 15), genealogies, lists, and prayers.

4. Literary keys

J E Smith suggests that five literary keys open up the meaning of Exodus.¹¹

¹⁰ J E Smith, *The Pentateuch* (Joplin, Mo: College Press Pub. Co., 1993), Electronic Edition.

¹¹ J E Smith, *The Pentateuch* (Joplin, Mo: College Press Pub. Co., 1993), Electronic Edition.

5. Literary Continuity

V. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

1. Deliverance

The overriding theme of the book of Exodus is deliverance. The events recorded cover a period of Israel's history from slavery in Egypt to emancipation and consolidation on Mount Sinai (approximately 1524-1443 B.C.). The book opens in darkness and gloom, yet ends in glory, it commences by telling how God came down in grace to deliver an enslaved people, and ends by declaring how God came down in glory to dwell in the midst of a redeemed people.¹²

The general contours of the Book of Exodus are erected around this movement from slavery to the concluding picture of worship. The transition from slavery to worship is accomplished through a very great redemption, which is at the centre of the book. Basic to all of Israel's later theology is the redemption of the exodus.¹³

Exodus begins with the groan of man and ends with the glory of God.

¹² G Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (England; Evangelical Press, 2002), 81.

¹³ W J Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 32.

Using this theme of redemption, Arthur Pink draws out a fivefold division for the book of Exodus:

The need for redemption – a people enslaved	Ex.1-6
The might of the Redeemer – displayed in the plagues of Egypt	Ex.7-11
The character of redemption – purchased by blood, emancipated by power	Ex.12-18
The duty of the redeemed – obedience to the Lord	Ex.19-24
The provisions made for the failures of the redeemed – tabernacle and services.	Ex.25-40

2. Liberation Theology and Civil Rights

Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery has been used as the foundation of "liberation theology." Gustavo Gutierrez gave this movement initial momentum with his book "A Theology of Liberation." Others have built on this and dedicated their writings to the liberation of the poor and oppressed by social revolution. This highly political "theology" usually identifies capitalism as the villain and Marxism is usually the deliverer. The black civil rights movement in America has also appealed to Exodus to support its anti-discrimination agenda. Their often-heard slogan is Moses' request to Pharaoh, "Let my people go" (5:1).

There is no doubt that social justice is an important theme in Exodus. After their deliverance God urged Israel to show particular kindness to poor people and aliens (Ex. 23:6, 9), because of what they suffered themselves at the hands of the Egyptians. The proper treatment of servants and employees was important to the Jews.

However, liberation theologians miss the main point. The Israelites were not delivered by revolting against Pharaoh but by the sovereign power of God alone. Also, the aim was not to set up a new form of government but to worship in the wilderness. It should also be noted that some of those who were "delivered" actually desired to return to Egypt (Ex.16:3). The salvation of the Bible is from sin and not from political oppression. It is concerned with man's relationship to God firstly, and only then man's relationship to man.

In their zeal for political reform, liberation theologians tend to overlook the need for the salvation of the individual soul. Evangelism is not important because, for them, good living conditions in the present world constitute salvation. Eternal realities fade into insignificance before the all-consuming needs of the here and now.¹⁴

3. Covenant

The theme of the book is the commencement of Israel as a covenant nation. It relates how God fulfilled His ancient promise to Abraham by multiplying his descendants into a great nation, redeeming them from the land of bondage, and renewing the covenant of grace with them on a national basis. At the foot of the holy mountain, He bestows on them the promises of the covenant and provides them with a rule of conduct by which they may lead a holy life, and also with a sanctuary in which they may make offerings for sin and renew fellowship with Him on the basis of forgiving grace.¹⁵

4. God's Grace

¹⁴ H Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), Electronic Edition.

¹⁵ G L Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), Electronic Edition.

5. God's Presence

The three major events in the book are the Exodus, the Law, and the Tabernacle. Each of these events emphasize one important truth – God is present with Israel as its Savior and King.

An emphasis on the presence of God runs throughout the whole book. The purpose of the exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai with its law and Tabernacle can be summarized in this way: God was preparing Israel for his arrival in their midst. The patriarchal covenant had contained the promise of descendants and the land. An element of that Genesis Land Promise was living in the presence of God. When the promise was confirmed to Abraham's children God assured them I am with you (Gen.26:3, 28:15). Joseph's life illustrated the principle of living in God's presence. But at the beginning of Exodus the land was not yet a reality and the descendants of Jacob were in danger of extinction. Even worse...the Israelites were not ready for life in God's presence because they have not yet learned of his great character. This was one of the lessons of the plagues.¹⁶

6. God's Self-Revelation

7. Perpetual Sinai Theme.

Thirteen chapters of Exodus describe the preparation for and the actual building of (chs.35–40) the Tabernacle. This constitutes about thirty-seven per cent of the book. Why is so much attention focused on this portable religious shrine? The answer comes in the final chapter of Exodus. The purpose of the Tabernacle was to perpetuate the Sinai experience. In Exodus 24:16f, the "glory of Yahweh" settled atop Sinai in the form of a devouring fire. The same imagery is used of the Tabernacle in 40:34 . Moses had been able to ascend the mountain. He could not, however, enter the glory of Yahweh which filled the Tabernacle (40:35). The sons of Aaron, however, could approach God's altar after they had gone through certain ritual (40:31). Just as Moses served as the mediator between Israel and God at Sinai, so the Aaronic priesthood would serve in that capacity perpetually.¹⁷

VI. NEW TESTAMENT ANALYSIS

The pattern of divine victory over enemies, the establishment of the divine dwelling place and the abundance of blessings find their greatest fulfillment in Christ's first and second comings (1Cor.10:1-13; Eph.2:14-22; Rev.20:11-22:5).¹⁸

¹⁶ B Arnold and B Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 110-111.

¹⁷ J E Smith, *The Pentateuch* (Joplin, Mo: College Press Pub. Co., 1993), Electronic Edition.

¹⁸ *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 98.

We especially see Christ in the “Types” of Exodus. A “Type” is a preview or fore-glimpse of Christ which may be seen in Old Testament people, places, objects and events. A type is more than an analogy. It was deliberately created by God to foreshadow the future.

Here the foundational truths of salvation are established, not so much in the form of explicit and systematic doctrine, but rather through types, symbols and Israel’s history. In the book of Exodus the glorious types of our Savior and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, shine forth. We meet him on every page, in every event. The New Testament guards us against excess and error by leading us to see, with the eye of faith, the Christ who is ‘in all the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:27). We see Christ as the spotless Lamb, the water-giving Rock, the manna from heaven, the cloud and fire of the constant presence of the living God. We see him at Sinai in the tabernacle, the altar, the shewbread, the lamp-stand, the veil, the ark, the mercy seat — in the priesthood, its garments and breastplate. In Exodus we see our deliverance from the slavery of sin (Rom. 6:6), and our hazardous journey to the promised land (1 Peter 1:4-6), following after the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:1-2).¹⁹

The central role that Moses plays in this book also points to Christ. As the Israelites were baptized into Moses (1Cor.10:2), when the people were led through the Red Sea, so Christians are baptized into Christ. Moses was the great servant of the Lord who received God’s words directly. The Gospel of Matthew especially presents Jesus as the fulfillment of this role of Moses by portraying Jesus as the one who underwent his own Exodus (Mat.2:14-15), taught God’s law on a mountainside (Mat.5:1), and stood in complete harmony with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat.17). As Moses was willing to die for the sake of the people (32:10) so Jesus substituted himself for his people. The glory of God that reflected in the face of Moses (34:29; 2Cor.3:8) is now reflected in those transformed by Christ’s Spirit (2Cor.3:18).²⁰

VII. THE MESSAGE OF EXODUS

Original Message:

Present Message:

¹⁹ G Crossley, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied* (England; Evangelical Press, 2002), 102.

²⁰ *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 98.