

The Oppression of Israel

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Date: 07 November 2021

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to the book of Exodus. I'm still tempted after our series in Matthew, after a couple of years now, to say the gospel of Exodus.

And it is, but I'd encourage you to turn to the book of Exodus, the second book of your Bible. We're continuing the series that we just started last week in the book of Exodus.

We're picking up today in verse 8, and we're going to read to the end of the chapter, verse 22.

So again, Exodus 1, 8 through 22. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

And he said to his people, Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us still shrewdly with them, lest they multiply.

[1 : 05] If war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land. Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.

They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Ramses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves, 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. Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shipra, the other Pua.

When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him. But if it is a daughter, she shall live.

[2 : 11] But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, why have you done this and let the male children live? And the midwives said to Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.

So God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.

Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, every son that is born to the Hebrews, you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live. Let's pray together.

Lord, we again thank you for your word and pray that you would open it to us now that we might spiritually understand it. By your spirits working in and through the preaching of the word and applying it to our hearts.

[3 : 16] We ask in Christ's name. Amen. Last week, we just did an introduction to the book of Exodus, but we briefly touched on verses 1 through 7.

What I want to draw out as well as we move forward is seeing the fact that what happens in verses 1 through 7 is really pointing us to the continuity with Genesis that we saw last week and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

It's saying God has been faithful to his promises to Abraham so far. You may remember some of those promises. Listen to Genesis 12, 1 through 3. Now the Lord said to Abraham, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, which is Canaan, not Egypt.

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

And so he's going to make Abraham into a great nation. And so we see even now as we begin the story, what we saw last week in the first seven verses. They go to Egypt, there's 70 of them. [4 : 31] But by verse 7, the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly. They multiplied and grew it seemingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. And so in terms of making them a great nation, we already see God's fulfilling that.

And I think we're going to see as well, to some extent at least, I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you. I will curse. As we see the oppression that happens in our text today. And then Genesis 17, 1 through 2. When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless. That I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.

And of course, that's what we're seeing. God is multiplying Abraham greatly. There's a promise there really with the people and the land. And so, as we begin Exodus, we're told, God's been giving Abraham a people.

He's making Abraham into a great nation. Look what's happening. But what's the problem? What has not yet been fulfilled? They don't have a land, do they? They're dwelling in Egypt as foreigners. [5 : 35] And now, even that in some ways is being taken from them as they become slaves in Egypt. Even worse than just being foreigners and sojourners there. And so, we see then Exodus even as a movement toward that land being given to them.

And if we think of that same movement as we were talking about last week, in the Abrahamic covenant, In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And we know the fulfillment of that is how will, in Abraham, all the families of the earth be blessed.

It's from the seed of Abraham, who is Jesus Christ, that all the families of the earth are blessed.

And we also understand that ultimately it's in Jesus Christ that Abraham becomes a father of a people more numerous than the sands of the seashore, and more than stars in the heavens.

It's God's people. The church. And so, the people described here as Israel are the recipients of the same covenant promises and blessings from God.

They are outwardly, at least, the people of God. What we might, in some way, relate as the visible church today, although we understand it's even different with the new covenant and what we understand of the recipients of that covenant as being really the invisible church.

[6 : 45] But what we see here is, outwardly at least, God's people being spoken of and described in verses 1-7, and even those who are being oppressed in verses 8-22.

And I want to take some time to look at the oppression, at least in two ways. There are probably three sets of oppression that happen here. The first is, they were oppressed with slavery.

And that's really the first point of my message. I want to look at that oppression. Secondly, they were oppressed with infanticide, the killing of the male children. And that comes in really two parts.

First, the midwives, and then later on, all of the nation. But let's look first at the slavery that they were oppressed with in verses 8-14. What's portrayed to us here at the very beginning is Pharaoh's fears.

There arose a king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And if you guys remember the back story, when Joseph came, he served Pharaoh and ended up becoming second in command.

[7 : 48] He was highly favored. They were given good land. The people were growing. Things were going really well. That king has died off. And remember, 400 years have passed. So in all likelihood, maybe a few kings have died off.

And in my study, it looks like the slavery may have endured for half of their time in Egypt, which would be 200 years. So the time in which this is first being spoken of, as this king rose up and didn't know them, and the oppression begins with slavery, may actually be an extended period from the infant side that we know happens near the time of Moses toward the end of that 200 years.

So what we see described, kind of condensed for us, may actually be covering perhaps even a 200-year period of their slavery and oppression. But this Pharaoh rises to power.

He doesn't know Joseph. He's forgotten all the good that Joseph has done. What he does know is there's a bunch of foreigners in our country that keep growing, and I'm intimidated by them. We might even say he's paranoid.

I would say paranoia partly because of his fears that he expresses. The people are too many and too mighty for us. Let us deal true with them. Lest they multiply, and if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.

[8 : 57] So there's this degree of paranoia. There might one day come a war against us, and if that day comes, then the people might one day side with the other people. And if they side with the other army, then they might escape from us, and we'd lose their presence here in our country, which seems to be what he's kind of going for anyway.

But would it be better if we just take advantage of them and use them as slaves? But you see really the fears and the paranoia of the Pharaoh. So the idea of dealing truly with them is partly in the Hebrew.

What's being expressed is he's going to outwit them. He's going to outsmart the Israelites. And how's he going to outsmart them? Well, he's going to, even before they're even planning to do it, to join up with their enemy, he's going to oppress them so that they won't be able to escape. They'll be weakened. They'll be diminished. Maybe many of them will die out. They'll stop multiplying the way they are. They'll be put in their place, lest they think too much of themselves and leave us.

And so there's this idea of, I'm going to outsmart them. I'm going to outwit them. And we get a sense of their miserable condition. Verse 11. Therefore, they set taskmasters over them.

[10 : 07] I hope you heard even as I read, I tried to emphasize things as I read the way I think this is being emphasized. Therefore, they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.

They built these cities. Verses 13 and 14. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service and mortar and brick and all kinds of work in the field.

In all their work, they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. I think Moses is trying to communicate to us by multiple words and sometimes repeating the same words like ruthless and bitter.

However, he wants us to understand just how bad this is. I don't think any of us are sitting around thinking, you know, it would be really great if I could be a slave. Right? That's really what I'm aspiring to in my life.

None of us, when you ask your kids, what do you want to be when you grow up? I'm thinking about being a slave. That's not what we desire. So we know it's bad. Right? We don't want that. But he's emphasizing they were treated ruthlessly.

[11 : 11] Their lives were bitter. This was very unpleasant for them. And we're told specifically some of the things that happened. I've mentioned already that slavery may have been for half their time in Egypt.

It's interesting to see how slavery is talked about later on. For example, Exodus 20, verse 2. This is the preamble to God's giving of the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. He says, I'm the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

So even the way it's spoken of, I said, again, it could be 200 years. It's not as though they were thrown into slavery for the last three months and then Moses comes and delivers them.

Or even 40 years because we know Moses leaves for a while and then comes back and delivers them. This probably endured for a large chunk of time. Even to the point that as they think of Egypt, God speaks of it as the house of slavery.

That's what Egypt was for them. Although inevitably there was blessing and growing during that time. Deuteronomy 6, 12. Take care lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[12 : 22] And again, Deuteronomy 4, 20. The Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance as you are this day. So in Deuteronomy 6, we heard house of slavery repeated.

But think of Deuteronomy 4, what it says. The Lord has taken you out of the iron furnace, an A positive here, out of Egypt. A parallel.

He said, just in case you don't understand what the iron furnace was, I'm talking about Egypt. So imagine, as we speak of things that are pleasant and things that are bitter, being inside of an iron furnace.

I don't know if any of you guys have furnaces in your basement. We were at Susquehaw. I could hear the furnace kick on downstairs and feel the heat coming up through the pipes and go down to explore it. But we're at the time of year when the furnaces are kicking back on and we're having to get them fired up.

And what would it be like to live inside of an iron furnace? Well, it wouldn't take very long. But what if it did? For 200 years, you lived inside an iron furnace. So you understand that what he's communicating is this was a very hard time for them.

[13 : 26] A very bitter providence. And we're told about what slavery entailed. They built the store cities of Pithom and Ramses. It says they built their own bricks and mortar.

So in addition, after these cities were built, there was additional building that they were required to do. I've heard people argue, maybe it's the pyramid.

We don't know what exactly they built. That's not communicated to us in God's word. But they obviously were involved in large building projects and being used to build large things during that time period, large cities.

They also were required to work the field. They were pursuing, they had to do agriculture for the sake of others beside themselves. As we see all this, understand this, that they were not suffering because of their unrighteousness or because of their sin.

Were they sinners? Yeah. Right? We all are. But we also know that there are times that people are specifically dealt with by God.

[14 : 32] And there may be suffering involved in that because of something they've done. We're going to see examples of that even as we go throughout Exodus and the entrance into the promised land. Remember, they're not to enter the promised land for 400 years until the sin of the Amorites is full.

So the sin has been filled up and then judgment's going to come upon them. They'll be suffering there. But that's not the case with them. Deuteronomy 9, 4 through 6, Moses says to them, Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, that's the people in the promised land, it is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land.

Whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land. But because of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God is driving them out from before you.

And that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.

And so they're not suffering specifically because of their righteousness. He says they are a stubborn people. But I would argue as well it's not because of their specific sin that they're here in bondage and slavery.

[15 : 52] But sometimes we want to equate this too directly to the church and Christian suffering. I'd say it's not directly a one-to-one. But we do see slavery as a type. Israel's slavery and misery is a type of the human condition.

Apart from Christ. In slavery to sin. And the misery that comes from that. It is bitter to live your life apart from God. Apart from Christ.

Apart from salvation. It's a bitter existence. It is a form of misery. And we know it's also slavery. We looked at this, I believe, last week. We were in bondage to sin.

I think it's important that we understand that to be saved, you need to be saved from something. I told you before about a pastor friend of mine who's in Tennessee who would say that you've got to get people lost before you can get them saved.

And what he meant by that is not you've got to make them lost. They're already lost. They just don't know they're lost. And we don't, until we know our need of salvation, we don't seek a Savior, do we?

[16 : 58] And so sometimes it's necessary that we have to see our need before we seek any solution. Maybe in terms of your life, sometimes if you're not aware of a problem, you're not seeking to solve that problem.

Someone brings it to your attention, hey, there's a problem. And now, oh, how can I fix that? Well, there's a problem. This oppression by Pharaoh multiplies their knowledge, their awareness that we don't want to be here.

We need to leave. We need someone to deliver us from our slavery. Much as we would understand the gospel. Just as Israel needed to be saved from their slavery and bondage, so too do all people

need to be saved from our slavery and bondage to sin.

We all need a Savior whether we see it or not. We're all born enslaved to sin. Listen to Romans 6. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

And then going on, verse 16 through 18 of Romans 6. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

[18:20] But thanks be to God that though you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed. And again in John 8, 24, Jesus answered and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

So we have to understand our condition apart from the Lord. Any of you in this room who have never put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ, it's a miserable state to be in. It's bondage to sin. It's slavery to sin. And my hope and prayer is that it makes you see, if you are in slavery and bondage, you need to be delivered or saved from that.

If that's going to happen, what do you need? You need a Savior. Because God's Word makes it clear we cannot save ourselves. And so we need someone who can save us from that condition. And the reality is what God's Word tells us is that in Christ, we are saved from slavery.

I read Romans 6 earlier. Our old self was crucified with him. Verse 7 says, For one who has died, and he means by through our union with Christ, we've been crucified with the crucified Christ.

[19:34] For one who has died has been set free from sin. It goes on in verse 18, which is following what we were just seeing in verses 16 through 17 in Romans 6. And having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

So in Christ, we've been set free from sin. Galatians 5.1 For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Don't willingly allow yourself to be slaves to sin again. But again, through freedom, Christ has set us free. And so we see that they were subjected to slavery.

And they're reaching a point, probably pretty early on, they're at a point where they know they need a Savior. They want to be delivered. And maybe they're beginning to remember again the promise that their time in Egypt would be 400 years.

And they would be delivered. And that God promised our father Abraham a land of his own. And so now they're yearning for that. They're crying out for that. This is what they're longing for. Secondly, though, we see this other oppression in verses 15 through 22 of what I've just labeled infancy.

[20:40] So when the slavery proves ineffective, and we see this in multiple places that I'll go to later on.

But we can look now at verse 12. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad. So more of them and more widespread.

They're taking over more of the land. So the slavery, which should, at least humanly speaking, the way Pharaoh viewed it, should have slowed down their process, their progress, their growth, put them in their place.

The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, means there's a quantitative relationship here. There's a direct correlation.

The greater the oppression, the greater the growth. It's the exact opposite. It should have been an inverse relation that we would expect. It's the exact opposite of that. What he does makes them to grow, it would seem.

[21:45] Why would that be the case? Because there's a sovereign God behind it, right? God's mindful of their oppression, and he's blessing them in the midst of oppression. But plan A doesn't work for Pharaoh.

He thought this would do it. It doesn't. So how are we going to take care of this now? Well, let's kill the boys off. We kill off a generation, maybe longer, of boys.

They're eventually going to die off. Or the women will be forced to marry Egyptians, and they'll lose their identity. They'll no longer be Israelites. They'll become a part of us. We'll really put an end to them altogether.

So he asked the midwives. It says the Hebrew midwives. This may mean that they were themselves Hebrew women. This may also mean that these were the midwives that were serving the Hebrews.

That they feared God in acting in faith would tend toward that they were actually Hebrew themselves. But I don't want to rule out the possibility or make it too tight in terms of how we can interpret this. It's also possible these were Egyptians that were serving them, who in time learned of their God and believed and feared their God.

[22 : 55] Either way, their midwives, he's commanded them to kill them. When that plan fails, we're going to look at that plan in a moment. When that plan fails, he then demands that all of Egypt unite to kill these children.

By throwing them into the Nile River, which the command of this, you picture, if you see a male Hebrew child, just chunk them in the river.

And so it's on every one of them. Murder has now been, not only is it not illegal, he's now commanding them to commit murder on all the Jewish children that are male that they can find. If you see one, you toss them in the river. And so you get a sense of what's going on. I want you to see the midwives' protection. We're told that they feared God more than Pharaoh.

They did not obey Pharaoh's command to kill the male children. So plan two, plan B, it's not working. He thought that it would stop their growth.

[24 : 01] It doesn't. He's aware. He finds out, Pharaoh finds out, that they haven't been doing it. They haven't been killed in children. It's pretty obvious, right? There's still boys around. You know, there's a certain age period. Who knows how long this goes on?

But you notice they've got kids there. And they're boys. It's obvious that they're not doing their job. And so plan B is not working as well. But I want you to understand that it says they feared God. We understand feared God more than Pharaoh. Why would they fear God about this? There are some deeper exegetical principles that we can understand here.

Why do they fear God? I think the only conclusion we can come to is because they understood that murder is wrong. Beyond that, they worship this God.

And this God is going to defend his people. But they haven't understood that murder is wrong. How do they know murder is wrong? Some of you are already thinking, because the Ten Commandments tell us murder is wrong. But that's it since 20, right?

[25 : 05] We're not there yet. We're still, maybe at this point, a couple decades away. We're a ways away from that. That hasn't happened yet. How do they know it's wrong? Now, this is, I'm going off, I'm chasing rabbits, a little parentheses here.

But you understand as well, Cain and Abel, right? Had the Ten Commandments, God's law, really been given? In some way, God has communicated or written his law in the hearts of men.

And yet it's a way different than what we understand in Jeremiah 31 in the New Covenant. God has written his law in the hearts of believers in a much different way. By the Holy Spirit, in which it brings conviction on us. But there's a sense in which all men have an understanding of moral law.

God's law, what's right and what's wrong. And so, they know it's wrong and know that if they commit murder, there will be judgment from God. Maybe they've already understood, to some extent, through oral tradition.

About Cain and Abel. But one way or another, they know that to do this would be wrong. Cain was judged before the Ten Commandments had been given.

[26 : 12] And we're getting on a deeper principle here that has become, I think, very important in terms of our culture today. It's been greatly discussed.

We've talked about it already in Sunday school. But what do we, as Christians, do when the command of God goes against the command of the king goes against the command of God? Or even the will or desire of God as he has expressed it. We are obligated to obey God rather than the man.

It doesn't matter who that man is. It doesn't matter how much power or authority he has. There is no man more powerful in the world in that day than Pharaoh. He's the greatest, he's the ruler of the greatest empire in history of that time.

He has more power than anybody else in the world. He tells them to do a hard thing but a simple thing in some ways. Just kill the child if it's male.

[27 : 14] You can discern gender. This is before people stop being able to discern gender. You can tell if it's a male or a female. If it's a male, kill it. And they say, but God tells us not to murder.

And if you say murder and God says not to murder, who do we side with? This shouldn't be complicated. Right? We obey God rather than the man. It does not matter the consequences.

Maybe that's hard for us sometimes. It doesn't matter what the consequences may be. And we have lived in a charm time in America where we haven't had to deal with these consequences. We were praying earlier for the persecuted church.

They're dealing with this. It's against the law to worship God in some places. Do you obey? No. You may be shrewd about how you do it.

You may do it. We know figuratively underground. We know at times in church history they were actually meeting in the catacombs underground. That's where it comes from. You hide it maybe.

[28 : 14] But do you stop working? No, you can't. God's commanded that we gather for worship. It's amazing. We take that even further. What do we voluntarily avoid church for?

What do we say? Eh, I got something else going on in my life. There are people in the world that are being commanded they can't worship unless they die and they're doing it. And we get small inconveniences or conflicts in our schedule and we say, worship of God is not that important. God's commanded it. And so, they obey God rather than the man. And they do what God's called them to do. And understand, they had to fear Pharaoh.

They had to understand that there would be consequences. Possibly their life. If you don't obey Pharaoh. A different Pharaoh, but I was thinking back to when Joseph was in prison.

We know that Pharaoh was taking heads back then. Right? We know it could be a death sentence and yet they obeyed God. I think we have to apply this as well, not just to the idea of when do we stand up against those who would disobey God's law, which I think is we see is when it goes against God's command.

[29 : 38] But I'd say as well, another important application for us today is in relation to abortion.

The infant side here, I don't think is that far from what we would understand with abortion.

Especially now, maybe I shouldn't say especially now, but we have seen political leaders who have argued that abortion should be extended to post-birth.

We know that a child after it's born and a child before it's born is still a child. It's a living being created in the image of our God, which is why murder is wrong.

But they're arguing for something very similar. When the child's born, if it's a boy, you kill it. Maybe the terminology change for our day and age would be when you realize it's a child and you think you don't want it, you kill it for whatever reason.

Whether that be some genetic flaw with the child or it's an inconvenient time or I don't want it to interfere with my career or whatever it may be, the cause. Abortion is not okay.

It's still murder. And just as we see these midwives stand up, we should stand up and say, this is wrong and this is murder. It's not okay. We side with God even when there are consequences.

[30 : 56] Our family may not like us, our co-workers, some places it may mean we lose our job. We have to stand for what's true and what's right. There's another ethical question here.

We dealt with two already. Right? Can we disobey the government? When it contradicts what God's commanded, we are obligated to disobey the government. Secondly, what about abortion?

It's murder and we have to stand against it. Third, is it okay to lie? Did anybody, as we were reading through this, actually, did you wonder this question? I mean, it seems to appear this way, right?

So the midwives, why are they not killing the babies? God's word tells us they feared God. What did they tell Pharaoh about why they're not killing the babies? Well, it's because, you just don't know, these Hebrew women, they're vigorous in birth.

Those babies come out fast. It's interesting. Maybe I shouldn't get into the history of childbirth in my family, but one of our dear children came very rapidly.

[32 : 09] Things were going, things went very slow with some. I guess it's fine to say the first two went very slow. The third one came. She, she was out in no time.

I didn't think we were going to make it to the hospital. We get to the parking lot. And then it says, I can't make it in. I said, you're getting in this hospital. I wasn't delivering them. I know there are stories of some in our church that have delivered babies, maybe in the snow, even in the car. Some children come fast. And they're arguing that this is an ethnic peculiarity. These group of people as a whole are having babies mighty fast.

We can't even get there in time. And part of the argument, I think, if I'm in favor, I would say, yeah, but you've got to show up at some point. Is it the same day? I mean, come on, really?

What does it matter if it's two minutes after they're born or it's two hours or two days after they're born? I gave you a task. And that really, to me, is part of what I think is so illogical about our culture

today with abortion.

[33 : 15] That we somehow think it matters if it's two minutes after or two minutes before, two weeks before, two weeks after. Where do we draw the line in when we can kill a child we're tired of and don't want anymore? But they tell them it's because they're vigorous.

Are they lying? I've read a multitude of commentaries. There are some who would argue, yeah, they kind of feel like they are. I tend to think there has to be an element of truth in this.

They're not openly lying. God blesses them for this. Maybe a way of presenting this is my understanding of Christian ethics is this. That it's never okay for us to violate one commandment to obey another commandment.

Or to break God's law to keep God's law. That's some tricky ethics there. So if God tells us not to commit murder, then we don't lie to keep from committing murder. We pray that God provides a way out other than our lying.

And I think that is what happened in this scenario. There's something true that God has established about them. They're having babies fast. For whatever reason, that's some legitimate excuse. One commentator, J.A. Moitier, says, God was kind to the midwives because of their actions.

[34 : 32] Their reply to Pharaoh was certainly evasive. Yeah. But their explanation must have had an element of truth in it for it to be accepted without question.

God did not bless their economy, quote, economy with the truth, but their resolute standing for what is right. So my hope is that you won't take from this it's okay for me to lie.

That's not the application of the passage. God does bless them for his protection of the children. So I think we don't lie to preserve life. We don't break one commandment to obey another, but they are eager to obey God's command and preserve life.

And so we see the results of Pharaoh's plan. In verse 12, we talked about earlier, the more he oppressed them, the more they multiplied. Look at verse 20. So God dealt well with the midwives and the people multiplied and grew strong.

Remember one of Pharaoh's fears? They're too strong for us. And so we're going to kill them and we try to kill them and what happens? They grow stronger and there's more of them. Not working, right?

[35 : 42] So again, his plan backfires. I want to ask an application. Do we believe the same is true of the church today?

Do we believe the same is true of the church today? What I mean is this. Do we believe that the attempts, the schemes, the strategies of the ungodly to oppress and stop the spread of the kingdom will succeed?

Maybe another way of saying this, will the gates of hell prosper? Do we believe that? I hope the answer's no.

Do we live like we believe it? When we see the church being oppressed, do we fall back in fear? Some of what I was talking about with our sermon series in the book of Psalms in worldview.

Do we fear this is it? This is the end? Christianity, there's no hope for Christianity. I want to argue that I believe we're seeing a pattern being set up here.

[36 : 51] God's church triumphs, grows, and strengthens even in the face of the persecution of those who want to keep it down or end it altogether. Do we believe that God's still involved in the life of the people of God?

Do we believe that he is still bringing about a plan that he has for the church? We love to quote Romans 8, 28, don't we? Do we believe it?

For we know that, let me read, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. All things are working together for good. We love to quote it, we just don't believe it, do we?

Because it doesn't seem like this is going to turn out for good. But we've got to believe it. It's exactly what they're experiencing. It's the crucible. It's the iron furnace.

It's bitter. It's ruthless. And yet they're growing. God's strengthened them. And specifically, we have the midwives who are being blessed. Did you notice, what's the name of this pharaoh?

[38 : 01] His name's not mentioned anywhere in the book of Exodus. This pharaoh's never given a name. We have the greatest ruler in history in that time. He doesn't even get a shout out.

Nothing. It doesn't matter who he was. Who is named? Did you catch two of the midwives their names are given? Maybe they were the two midwives that were tasked with this.

Their name's given, this is back, was it, verse 15. Shipra and maybe Puah. Their name is given, Pharaoh's not named.

I think that's intentional. How does God assess status and who matters in this world?

Who's more important to the story of the Exodus? Eh, Pharaoh. Don't even remember his name, but these two midwives get their name eternally remembered. I think that's powerful.

[39 : 00] thirdly, I want you to see God's plan. Earlier, we saw that God had promised to Abraham a land and a people, and we've talked about how that's being fulfilled.

I want to go even further back. The promise that precedes that, that led to the Abrahamic covenant, was the promise of Genesis 3.15. In the midst of the curse, God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent.

Now, my view of redemptive history, and even a big view of the Bible is, what we see throughout the Bible is the outworking of Genesis 3.15. We see, early on in the book of Genesis, a split between two peoples, really the sons of the woman, who are counted through Seth, and then those who are counted from Cain's offspring.

And there's just division between the people of God and the people of man, and then there's this polluting as they begin to lose their identity to the point that only Noah's left. I don't want to do all of redemptive history, but you guys see the big picture.

It's only Noah's left, so God judges the whole earth, and it starts over again, and again we see this division between the people of God and really the servants of Satan, this division between the two.

[40 : 15] And so I would argue all throughout history there has been this desire by Satan to not have his head crushed. I mean, go figure, not very pleasant. He doesn't want to be defeated, and so how's he going to stop that?

He's there when the curse is given. And so he knows that it's going to be from the seed of the woman that the Savior will come. By the time we get to Abraham, we know more specifically it's from Abraham's line.

Through you, through your offspring, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. and so I think we're dealing with a much bigger picture here when we get to the idea of killing off all the male children.

Sorry. Why is that a problem? Because one of those male children who isn't even named at this point, because it's actually not through Moses, but one of those male children that are being born around this time period while they're in slavery will be the ancestor of the Messiah.

It's through his line that he will come. And so, bear with me for a moment. If Pharaoh kills off all the male children from one generation, one generation of all of Israel, if he's successful, what will that mean for the line of the Messiah?

[41 : 34] Can the Messiah come? No. So we're at Christ's point here. And I'd go even further. Why are the midwives, why is it important that they preserve life?

Because we don't know where the child's coming. When he's coming, what child it will be. But there will be a male child who will be born to us who will be the son of God and the son of man. Fully God, fully man, who will deliver us.

And so, they yearn, they long for a deliverer. And I'm getting ahead of myself because we're going to see Moses then becomes a type of that. But he is not that. But they're yearning, they're longing for God's promises to be kept.

So God's plan is to bring about a deliverer. The Abrahamic covenant is a continuation of the promise in Genesis 3.15. It's from Adam's line, Abraham's line, that the seed will come.

So, think back, there's a famine in the land where Abraham's living. Do you remember why they're in Egypt in the first place? Joseph sovereignly ends up in Egypt.

[42 : 36] So happens, coincidentally, he ended up in Egypt and second in command of all of Egypt. God sovereignly puts him there so that he can go and deliver his brothers, the twelve tribes of Israel.

He can deliver them and bring them into Egypt that they would not die in the famine. Why? Because if they did have a famine and it's supposed to come from Abraham's seed, then what hope is there? How's the Messiah going to come?

And so, their deliverance really from the promised land that they had not yet really occupied, but their deliverance from there into Egypt was so that the line of the Messiah would not be broken, that the Messiah could come.

Now, 400 years later, it's crisis point again. There's a possibility they're trying to kill off the line of the Messiah. How are we going to have deliverance? So, before the promise was under threat and God delivered them through the famine, now the oppression of Israel is a new threat to the Messiah line. Will God keep them safe? Will he fulfill his promises to them? They're in need of salvation, just as we are. And I want to tie this as well with, there's a similar event that happens in Jesus' day.

[43 : 51] You remember King Herod? He attempts to kill all the male children to what? What's his purpose? To prevent the king from coming. Step back, let's look at the big picture.

I would argue that this is, again, a satanic attempt to prevent the line of the... This is last chance if Satan can even understand that this is the right one. But, the Messiah's come, he's been born, we've got to kill off all the children under two, we cover a time range so we know that we get the Messiah.

But the goal is to kill the Messiah. And how is Christ delivered? This will be great trivia, you guys remember? In a dream, Joseph and Mary are told to flee to Egypt.

So they go to Egypt, in many ways he mirrors the experience of the Israelites to deliver the line of the Messiah so that Christ can come.

Christ can be our deliverer, our savior. And so, what we see here that seems like maybe just an interesting story is part of a huge cosmic plan of salvation and deliverance for God's people.

[45 : 04] So application, just for a moment, how does this apply to us? Well, as we think about this and we're going to have more chance to dive in more deep to God's plan and what he's doing as we go through the book of Exodus.

It's exciting, I want to keep going, but we'll get there. For now, I think one application we should understand throughout this book is that we too are foreigners and exiles in this world. This world is not our home.

Just as the Israelites are in Egypt and they're longing for the promised land, we're longing for the promised land. We're longing for Canaan. We're longing for not a physical land in Israel. Please don't draw that conclusion.

God's speaking of a greater rest for us. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God and that is ultimately the new earth and the new heavens. At least temporarily it will be to be in the presence of the Lord spiritually before our bodies are glorified and brought into a new creation of a new earth and new heavens.

But Peter, when he writes 1 Peter 1.1, he says, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect, exiles of the dispersion. I think he's not speaking specifically of the Jews who are outside of Jerusalem.

[46 : 18] He's saying our identity today is that we are exiles. We are foreigners. We are strangers in this world. I mentioned this earlier but the time in Egypt was not punishment upon Israel.

Genesis 46, 1-4. Genesis 46, 1-4. God says to Jacob who's named Israel, I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt for there I will make you into a great nation.

I myself will go down with you to Egypt and I will also bring you up again and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes. So God told Israel before they ever went in, don't be afraid to go down to Egypt.

There I will make you into a great nation and I will deliver you. And so it's part of God's plan to make them great. Genesis 15, 13-14. Then the Lord said to Abram, Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, slaves.

And they will be afflicted for 400 years. So he classifies the entire time as affliction. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

[47 : 30] So I will bring them out again and even I will bless them with great possessions as they go out. So a third point of application, we can understand that we too can expect suffering. I want you to understand that they're not receiving suffering specifically because of something they did.

To understand that don't think that becoming a Christian means you're never going to face suffering. Suffering is the normal experience of life in a fallen world. And God's word actually tells us it's kind of multiplied for Christians because there will be those who will persecute us because we are a Christian.

But what I want you to see as though the road be difficult, it's part of God's plan just as it was for the Israelites going down to Egypt. Acts 14-22.

Paul and Barnabas return to Lystra and Iconium and to Antioch strengthening the souls of the disciples encouraging them to continue the faith. So you have Paul and Barnabas going and they're

visiting three cities and they're strengthening and encouraging the saints in their faith. What do you say to them to strengthen and encourage them in their faith? What do I need to say to you guys to strengthen you and encourage you in your faith today? Saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

[48 : 47] Be encouraged through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Anyone who's saying something other than that is a false teacher. If you're looking even I think going back to our application to our biblical worldview if you're looking at the world around you and you're getting upset because you think life isn't so comfy for Christians anymore you've misunderstood the Christian life.

Through suffering we will enter the kingdom of God. If God graciously gives us a period where there's not much suffering praise God. That's very kind of Him.

But the normal experience of the Christian is through suffering. It's a means through which we enter the kingdom of God. And so that ought to be our expectation.

And in that we ought to be assured that we are secure in the Savior's hands. John 10 28-29 Jesus praying prays I give them eternal life and they will never perish as those who trust in Him.

No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who's given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. We have this double hand thing going on. And so what ultimately matters is salvation.

[50 : 03] And there's no experience of suffering there's nothing that anyone can do no principality no satanic power there's nothing that can snatch us out of the hand of Christ or out of the hand of God the Father.

And so we ought to be encouraged to expect suffering but also know that God's still sovereign and He's still in control. Fourthly despite the threatening of men even the ruler of the greatest empire of that day God continues to bless His people and prepare the way for the coming of Christ.

Do we believe that's still true today? No matter what the threatenings may be of rulers that are over us God's still going to bless His people and He's going to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. We're still looking for the coming of Christ aren't we? For His second coming. Is there anything that's going to stop the church from advance to the ends of the earth or to stop that from happening? No.

And then finally do we fear men more than God? How might things have looked different had the midwives feared men more than God? Do we believe that God rewards those who fear Him?

[51 : 11] We see an example of this with the midwives. It says He blessed them with families. They preserve life and there's this direct... He gives them life. He makes their families to be great because they kept other families from being really demolished.

Do we believe that God's plan cannot be thwarted and the attempts of the enemy to crush the church will only result in its growth? Do we believe that's true today? We see a bit of it here.

We can look back in ways that those who are living in that day cannot and say, if you buy my argument that the plan here ultimately is to kill the land of the Messiah, did it work?

Christ still came. Do we believe that any attempt to prevent Christ from returning is going to happen? nothing? No. He will keep his promises. Nothing can thwart it.

Do we believe the gospel is going to go to the ends of the earth? And again, I don't know that I buy, I mean I would say I don't buy that it means every person on earth is going to become a Christian, but do we believe that every nation will have believers in it?

[52 : 19] The gospel will penetrate to the very ends of the earth. There will be people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who will worship our God. Can anything stop that? Nothing. not the threats of those nations, their leaders, nothing is going to stop the events.

So, what are we fearing? We are encouraged in a similar, though not nearly in many ways as miserable condition as the Israelites.

This world is not our home. And we're trusting God and his plan that he's sending his Messiah. And one day he will deliver us from this earth. into his presence where there will be fullness of joy and forever.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word and we pray that you would help to apply that to our hearts that we might rightly understand it.

Allow us to see ourselves as sojourners and foreigners and strangers here. Life is so comfortable right now in America. Things are so easy that we forget sometimes.

[53 : 32] We're glad to be here. We don't want to go. It's a hard atmosphere for raising missionaries and even faithful Christians.

Lord, break us from that. Show us our need for salvation. that our hope is not ultimately in comfort but in eternity. May we set our eyes there.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.