

Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology

Exodus: Introduction

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Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Exodus, Moses, Midwives, Yahweh, Reed Sea, Plagues, Torah, Covenant, Pharaoh, Goshen

Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Ted Hildebrandt introduces the Book of Exodus, framing it as the foundational redemptive act of the Old Testament that prefigures the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He outlines the five key movements of the narrative while addressing historical, geographical, and textual issues, including the dialectic between oral tradition and written record that supports Mosaic authorship. Furthermore, Hildebrandt explores Pharaoh's state-sponsored oppression, the courageous defiance of the Hebrew midwives, and God's sovereign revelation of the sacred covenant name Yahweh at the burning bush.

Outline

I. Introduction and Title of Exodus

A. Administrative background and course context

1. Transition out of Genesis into the Book of Exodus
2. Preparation for upcoming examination and study guide release

B. Etymology and meaning of the title 'Exodus'

1. Greek derivation: Ek ('out/out of') and odos ('way') = 'the way out'
2. Core thematic meaning: the way out of bondage in Egypt

II. Five Main Movements in the Book of Exodus

A. Birth and Call of Moses

1. Pentateuch ('five books') written on ancient scrolls, not bound codices
2. Identification of Moses as the foundational author

B. The Ten Plagues of Egypt

1. Theological duel between Jehovah God and the divine status of Pharaoh
2. Contrast between visible worldly power (chariots) and invisible divine authority

C. Crossing of the Reed Sea (Yam Suph)

1. Distinction between 'Red Sea' translation and Hebrew 'Sea of Reeds'
2. Miraculous parting of waters and definitive destruction of Egyptian army

D. Construction of the Tabernacle

1. Portable tent sanctuary enabling God to dwell in the midst of Israel
2. Detailed architectural specifications and translational nuances of materials

E. Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai

1. Sinaitic Covenant compared to Abrahamic Covenant (obedience vs. circumcision)
2. Immediate covenantal infraction and human failure to uphold the law

III. Theological and Biblical Significance of Exodus

A. Exodus as the Primary Old Testament Redemptive Act

1. Old Testament counterpart to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. Definitive historical act recalled throughout Israel's liturgical history

B. Oral and Written Dynamics of the Torah

1. Dynamic oscillation between divine spoken word and written scroll (Exodus 17:14; 24:4)
2. Checks and balances between public oral recitation and text preservation
3. Refutation of critical theories that detach historical authors from biblical texts
4. New Testament confirmation of Mosaic authorship (John 1:17; 7:19–22)

C. Echoes of Exodus Across Scripture

1. Prophetic literature: Hosea 11:1 ('Out of Egypt I called my son')
2. Gospels: Jesus as the new Israel re-enacting Exodus, baptism, and wilderness temptation
3. Pauline epistles: Christ designated as our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5)
4. Christian sacraments: Passover roots of the Eucharist and unleavened bread
5. Apocalyptic literature: Plagues in the Book of Revelation echoing Egyptian plagues
6. Psalms: Historical psalms and the Great Hallel celebrating deliverance

IV. Ancient Egyptian Historical and Geographical Context

A. Survey of Ancient Egyptian History

1. Herodotus' designation: Egypt as the 'gift of the Nile'
2. Old Kingdom (2700–2100 BC): Era of pyramid construction preceding Abraham
3. Middle Kingdom (1991–1670 BC): Era of flourishing arts and wisdom literature
4. New Kingdom: Era of imperial expansion and military campaigns
5. Intermediate Periods: Eras of political chaos, foreign infiltration (Hyksos), and instability

B. Geography of Sinai and Goshen

1. Topography of the Sinai Peninsula, Gulf of Suez, and Gulf of Aqaba
2. Cultural friction between Hebrew pastoral shepherds and Egyptian agrarian farmers
3. Tactical placement: Land of Goshen designated as a military buffer against northeast invasions

V. Pharaoh's Oppression and the Hebrew Midwives

A. Oppression Through Taskmasters

1. Collision between God's mandate to multiply and Pharaoh's genocidal opposition
2. Enslavement and building store cities (Pithom and Rameses) failing to halt growth

B. Defiance of the Midwives (Shiphrah and Puah)

1. Literary irony: Midwives named in the text while Pharaoh remains anonymous
2. Refusal to execute state-ordered infanticide due to fear of God
3. Theological reflection on deception, preservation of innocent life, and contextual ethics

VI. Early Life, Call, and Commission of Moses

A. Deliverance at the Nile River

1. Divine irony: Instrument of death transformed into the vessel of Moses' rescue
2. Adoption by Pharaoh's daughter and strategic intervention by Miriam

B. Three Forty-Year Stages of Moses' Life

1. Years 1–40: Egyptian royal court education and family heritage
2. Years 41–80: Midian desert shepherd learning endurance and humility
3. Years 81–120: Wilderness leader shepherd of the nation of Israel

C. The Burning Bush and Divine Call

1. Divine response to the prayers and cries of oppressed Israel
2. Moses' five objections and divine assurances
 - a. Objective query of personal identity ('Who am I?') → 'I will be with you'
 - b. Query regarding divine name → Revelation of 'I AM WHO I AM'
 - c. Concern regarding credibility → Miraculous signs (staff to serpent)
 - d. Lack of eloquence → Divine creation of speech and appointment of Aaron
 - e. Reluctance to serve → Divine structure of Moses as God to Aaron, Aaron as prophet
3. Theological interpretations of the Divine Name Yahweh
 - a. Self-existent God needing nothing outside Himself
 - b. Sovereign God demonstrating His identity through mighty acts
 - c. Covenant-keeping God fulfilling promises made to the patriarchs