

SESSION 4: EXODUS NARRATIVE

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read Exodus 1-15.

Summary of the Video: Module 1, Session 4

Between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus (about 400 years), God's people grew into a sizeable population. Remember, though, that those twelve tribes of Israel had finished Genesis living in Egypt because of the famine in Israel. The growth of their numbers took place in a foreign land, under a foreign leader who expected allegiance and worship of him and his gods. The book of Exodus tracks their journey out of Egypt toward the land God had promised to Abraham.

The video begins with an overview of the Exodus story (Exodus 1-15). Andrew Wilson makes the point that "exodus" doesn't just happen once in Scripture; it is a repeated pattern that happens on personal and national levels. Moses himself experiences several episodes that are like a little exodus.

The video then wades into the complex topic of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. We know that God is king over everything and that he does whatever he wants to do, but we also know that humans have responsibility to take action for their lives. Bible-readers have wondered for centuries how these two realities can be true at the same time. Does God make people do things? Do humans act completely freely of God's control? Is there some kind of middle ground? Andrew Wilson tries to help us see the tension and learn how to approach it.

After this brief summary of the Exodus Narrative, the lecture pauses so that we can have a group discussion. Listen to Andrew Wilson's instruction in the video but don't do the exercise until you meet together.

Terms You'll Need to Know:

Narrative—another word for "story"; it is a narration, a telling of a story. A narrative can be either real or imaginary. The exodus and wilderness narratives are real stories of real people.

Pantheon—a collection or hierarchy of gods.

Egyptian pantheon—the ancient Egyptian people viewed the entire world as governed/controlled by many different gods; they had gods for the sky, the sea, the sun, rivers, for war, for the dead, for chaos, for wind, cows, frogs, childbirth, grain, etc. They worshiped pharaoh as a god.

Sovereignty—from the word "sovereign" (meaning "ruler"), this word describes someone's authority or rule; in reference to God it tells us that he is the ruler of all things (and in this video we begin to ask how he does this).

Calvinism—based in the teachings of John Calvin (1500s), this theology places heavy emphasis on God’s sovereignty. He taught much, much more than this, but it is this topic we discuss today.

Arminianism—based in the teaching of Jacobus Arminius (1500s), this theology places heavy emphasis on human responsibility. He taught much, much more than this, but it is this topic we discuss today.

Two Dimensional—if you look at an object and can only see its width and length, you see in two dimensions. If you can also see its depth, you see in three dimensions.

John Walton—professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College whose video about the way ancient near easterners viewed the world was watched in the Session “Primeval History”.

Watch Video

Watch Module 1, Episode 4 (22 minutes).

Pentateuch

- I. Overview of the Pentateuch
- II. Primeval History (Gen 1-11)
- III. Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50)
- IV. Exodus Narrative (Ex 1-15)**
- V. Wilderness Narrative (Ex 16-19, 24, 32-34; Num 11-25; Deut 1-4)
- VI. Laws, Lists & Land at Sinai (Ex 20-23, 25-31, 35-40; Lev 1-27; Num 1-10, 26-36; Deut 5-28)
- VII. The Punchline of the Pentateuch (Deut 29-34)

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The Exodus Story

- An overview of the Exodus story
 - Ex 1: Delivered at birth
 - Ex 2: Kills an Egyptian and flees into the wilderness
 - Ex 3-4: Encounters God at the burning bush. Receives revelation of who God is
 - Ex 5-6: Confronts Pharaoh, makes the slavery worse, and is recommissioned by God
 - Then the plagues, which deliberately challenge Egyptian views of the gods:
 - Ex 7: Blood
 - Ex 8: Frogs, Gnats, Flies
 - Ex 9: Plague on livestock, Boils, Hail
 - Ex 10: Locusts, Darkness
 - Ex 11-12: The final plague: the death of the firstborn, and the Passover
 - Ex 13-14: Moses leads Israel out of slavery into freedom
 - Ex 15: The Israelites celebrate victory together

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Group Exercise #1 – Exodus 3: God, Gospel, People, Mission

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'" And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

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Group Exercise #2 – Exodus 12: God, Gospel, People, Mission

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt ...

Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. At midnight the LORD struck down 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 the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!" The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations.

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Group Exercise #3 – Exodus 15: God, Gospel, People, Mission

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.' You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased.

You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The LORD will reign forever and ever." For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea.

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."

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Sovereignty and Responsibility: The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- One of the thorniest theological questions we face, as those who take the Bible as God's inspired and authoritative word, concerns the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility
- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart raises this question, and it is also quoted in the most famous NT passage to address the issue, Romans 9
- In chronological order, here's how it goes in the Exodus story:
 - 3:19-20: "But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go."
 - 4:21: And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go."
 - 7:3-4: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, & though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you."
 - 7:13-14: Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go."
 - 7:22: So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
 - 8:15: But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
 - 8:19: But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
 - 8:32: But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
 - 9:7: But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.
 - 9:12: But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
 - 9:34-35: But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go.
 - 10:20, 27; 11:10: But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let [the people of Israel] go.

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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. Andrew sees a repetition of "exodus" in Moses' life (and in other parts of the biblical story). It's as if God prepares Moses for it with little versions of the exodus and then he reminds his people of the exodus through smaller and larger versions of it. What connections can you make between the "exodus" and our salvation in Christ?

2. What sorts of “slavery” (oppression by an evil person, system, or way of thinking) do people experience in your culture? Identify the oppressor and then talk about how God might free the person under its rulership.

3. Describe how Andrew Wilson views God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. What does he see as problematic in overemphasizing either of the two?

4. In your own life, which side of the tension (God’s sovereignty or human responsibility) do you tend to emphasize?

5. Can you perceive how this tension would need to be held while counseling someone in crisis?

6. What has most captivated you about God’s character, personality, and actions in the exodus?

7. Set a timer for 15 minutes. Read the Scripture passages from three “Group Exercise” PowerPoint Notes and respond to the prompt. As you read each passage, record what you might learn about God, Gospel, People and Mission from *just this passage*. This is an exercise in Biblical Theology in which we attempt to see what a particular part of Scripture (the Exodus Narrative) teaches us. Take notes on what you come up with:

God

Exodus 3

Exodus 12

Exodus 15

Gospel

Exodus 3

Exodus 12

Exodus 15

People

Exodus 3

Exodus 12

Exodus 15

Mission

Exodus 3

Exodus 12

Exodus 15

Meditation on Scripture

Exodus 3:2-8, 13-15

Exodus 7:3-4; 9:34-35

Exodus 15:1-3, 11-13

Putting This Session into Practice

Andrew Wilson makes the case that “exodus” out of slavery and into God’s rule is a recurring theme of Scripture and of life. It happens in us personally, in our families, at our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, in our nations, and in our people group. Be on the lookout this week for the oppression people around you still sit under. Pray specifically that God would free people to worship him. Make an effort to point out the oppression and offer people a way out.

