

## Today's Sermon

# God's Unstoppable Promises

## Exodus 1

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, Aug. 14, 2022

Please turn to my favorite book of the Bible, the book of Exodus. It's a favorite story of many. It captures the imagination of old and young, from flannelgraph to feature films. It invites us to:

- picture a baby in a basket and a bathing princess nearby who secretly adopts him, a burning bush, and a bad Pharaoh facing down a bearded Moses. Can you see his staff turn to a snake or turn the Nile to blood, or turn water on Egypt in the Red Sea or water out a rock to Israel?
- meditate on God's plagues to Egypt, a pillar of fire or cloud to guide Israel, provision of manna in the wilderness, and Passover lamb blood on doorposts so the angel of death passes
- hear the words '*I AM...let my people go to worship me...You shall have no other gods...*'
- read here of Ten Commandments, the tabernacle, and taking off sandals on holy ground
- feel the impact of God's glory at Mt. Sinai but also the golden calf of sinners down below
- sense that this is for us, as the NT says it was written for our example and encouragement<sup>1</sup>

It's been said 'Exodus is an epic tale of fire, sand, wind, and water. The adventure takes place under the hot desert sun, just beyond the shadow of the Great Pyramids...For Jews it is the story that defines their very existence, the rescue that made them God's people. For Christians it is the gospel of the Old Testament, God's first great act of redemption... It is the story that gives every captive the hope... "free at last." The exodus shows that there is a God who saves, who delivers his people from bondage.'<sup>2</sup> That's from Phil Ryken, preaching it the year Boice died.

Last week we looked at the preface in v. 1-5 about Joseph's family and God's providence in their story. Today we pick up in v. 6: *Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.* <sup>7</sup> *But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.* <sup>8</sup> *Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.* <sup>9</sup> *And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. <sup>10</sup> Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."* <sup>11</sup> *Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup> "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."*

This is God's Word, but in the first 16 verses we don't see the word *God*. We don't see His name maybe because Israel couldn't see what He's doing? He seemed absent but He's faithfully at work behind the scenes in His providence. He's in charge. ESVSB: 'The overarching theme of Exodus is the fulfillment of God's promises.'<sup>3</sup> We see it here against wicked sin and a world superpower.

Nothing and one can thwart God's hand or stop His plan. God is the King above all kings and suffering, and even in oppression He is blessing and being faithful to promises to His people. What God says He will do, no matter the opposition or obstacles, His promises are unstoppable.

### 1. God's promises don't depend on man

Last week we saw the story of Jacob and how undependable he and his sons were. But God is faithful to preserve them through Joseph who blesses and brings his family alive to Egypt. v. 6 says Joseph and that generation died. Did God's blessing or promises die with Joseph? v. 7: ***But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them...*** Joseph wasn't alive, but God's promise is alive.

***It didn't die or depend on a human person, it depended on the Divine Persons***

Flip back to Gen 48, just 3 chapters before, and let's see His promise to Joseph through Jacob.

Gen 48:3 is God Almighty speaking, and look at v. 4, He '*said to me, "Behold, I will make you **fruitful and multiply** you and make you a company of peoples'* (NKJV 'multitude'). Fruitful and multiply are the exact same Hebrew verbs in Ex 1:7 that God is doing beyond Joseph's lifetime.

God commanded Noah with the same verbs and '*increase greatly*' (Gen 9:7) but God commits to do that with Israel. It doesn't depend on you; it depends on the God who is faithful and true.

***Joshua 21:45 says not one word of God's promises to Israel failed, all came to pass***

In Gen 15 God told Abraham look up at the heavens, see if you count the stars, that's how many your descendants will be. And He promised them land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates.

God cut a covenant promise in blood to Abraham, and God alone passed through the animals as Abraham was passively listening and then passed out. The point: it's not dependent on man, this promise to Abraham and his seed is unilateral and unstoppable. In Gen 17 he was 99 years old, his wife still barren for decades, but he hears God Almighty promise '*I will greatly increase your numbers...I will make you very fruitful*'<sup>4</sup> [*and will multiply you exceedingly* NKJV v. 3].

The same Hebrew words in Ex 1:7 show God fulfilled that promise, but beyond Abraham's life and not dependent on man or man's timetable. A lot of years transpired without a lot of kids. It

got off to a slow start: Abraham had Isaac, Isaac had Jacob and Esau, but only Jacob is counted in the covenant line of promise. What happened to the song "Father Abraham has many sons, right arm, left arm," etc.? I'm not good at math, but that's not quite the number of stars in the sky or sand grains in the seashore for Abraham's son and 2 grandsons. Still, you can depend on God to fulfill His promises even when you can't see much. God's specialty is small beginnings.

Ex 1 picks up the pace with Jacob's 12 sons and exponential growth, many kids and counting, they're multiplying like rabbits! The Egyptians must wonder if it's something in the water from that part of the Nile? Every Jewish woman seems to be pregnant everywhere you look? Here a kid, there a kid, everywhere a kid, kid! A population explosion and promise fulfillment by God

## 2. God's promises can't be stopped by sinful man

Our scripture reading was Acts 7, a Spirit-inspired commentary on Abraham and how God *'promised to give... offspring after him, though he had no child...as **the time of the promise drew near**, which God had granted to Abraham, the people **increased and multiplied in Egypt** until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph.'* ...God spoke to this effect —that his offspring would be ***sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place*** [promised land of Israel]

**That's from Gen 15, both the exodus and the enslavement were promised, with an end date** In v. 8 that other king rises up who's not familiar with Joseph or friendly to his people filling up his kingdom. In v. 9 he says in a government capacity these Jews are *'too many and too mighty for us. Come let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply...'* (as if he can stop God's plan).

In v. 10 he wants to stop Israel from becoming a great nation or leaving their land, but that's the very thing God promised to Jacob in Gen 46, even using the very same word for leaving Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

In v. 11-14 Egypt afflicts and enslaves them, only to fulfill the exact words promised in Gen 15.

**Pharaoh thinks hard labor will decrease Israel, but pregnancies and moms in birth labor increase!** We sing 'standing on the promises' – Pharaoh's standing against the promises of God the King.

In v. 10 he wants to stop Israel from joining with Egypt's enemies, that's the same word in the prophecy to the mother of Jacob: *'...may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.'*<sup>6</sup> God used that same word to promise to Abraham his innumerable offspring would conquer their enemies. Pharaoh unwittingly joins in prophecy.<sup>7</sup>

He also joins in history with Gen 11. Gen 9 said *be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*, but sinful man had another plan staying at Babel. Gen 11:3 *'Come, let us make bricks, and...mortar ...Come, let us build ourselves a city...let us make a name for ourselves...'* Ex 1:10 is the same phrase on Pharaoh's lips: *'Come let us...'* And in v. 11 his plan is to build for himself cities. v. 14 mentions brick, mortar like Babel. Pharaoh tries to make a name for himself over Israel, but the irony is Ex 1 doesn't even give the name of Pharaoh, on purpose (for a point we'll see later).

God stopped sinful Babel's plan by dividing them into languages, including Egyptian, to spread them into nations, and then in Gen 12 God tells Abraham *'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.'* In Exodus, we'll see that promise fulfilled, as Egypt dishonors the children of Abraham, so curses and plagues will come as God promised. But we'll also see blessing in Exodus to Egyptians and other Gentiles who share the faith of Father Abraham, and midwives blessed with families here.

**Even what Pharaoh meant for evil, God meant for good, to save many**

Sinful man can't stop what God promises, and when he tries, he just fulfills the promises more.

Pharaoh didn't know of God's prophecies he was fulfilling, or his own self-fulfilling prophecy in the end of v. 10, where he fears the day Israel may *'fight against us and escape the land.'* If you turn to Ex 14, that's the very word used twice, but not Israel fighting, God himself fulfills what Pharaoh said, using his very own words. Look at **Ex 14:14: *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.***<sup>15</sup> *The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward... God parts the Red Sea so Israel can escape, the Egyptian army pursues but in v. 25 God clogs 'the chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."*

The Egyptian King said 'let us be shrewd with Israel, lest they fight against us and flee from Egypt,' now his shrewd army says 'let us flee from Israel for their God is fighting against us!'

He didn't want Israel to escape, now there's no escape for his army when Israel's God fights!

So go back to Ex 1, and the irony is his opposition has the opposite result he wants. He doesn't want Israel to join those who hate Egypt or leave, but then his affliction drives them to that. He says let's be wise, but he's a fool. He said let's stop Israel multiplying, let's oppress them more.<sup>12</sup> *But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad.* He wants Israel to dread but v.12 *'the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.'*<sup>13</sup> *So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service ...* History tells us 'Pharaoh's slaves were organized into huge work gangs, concentrated in labor camps, and then forced to complete massive building

projects—all under the strict control of their masters. Inscriptions in the tomb of Rekhmire at Thebes depict prisoners from Canaan at all stages of brick-making: hauling water, pouring clay, cutting bricks, hauling stacks of bricks to a work site, and then laying them with mortar. They are supervised by taskmasters armed with sticks, ready to beat their slaves into submission...[or in v. 14] literally...“broken down.”<sup>8</sup>

All that can't break God's promises, but His people couldn't see it yet, or what was still to come

### 3. God's promises defeat sin and Satan

The rest of chap 1 shows 'no power of hell nor scheme of man' can stop God's promised plan. Pharaoh tried to make life hell, but v. v. 16 isn't just a scheme of a sinful man, there's a deeper darkness trying to kill baby boys on the birthing stool. He moves from enslavement to execution order 66. Oppression turns to outright genocide by infanticide, murdering infants. This isn't just a struggle against flesh and blood and the ruler of Egypt, there are spiritual rulers behind this in spiritual warfare. And there's also a promise in Genesis that makes sense of this. Turn back to Gen 3 and remember this is all part of the same scroll and story, assuming you read the 1<sup>st</sup> part.

Gen 1 is the first time this '*fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*' language is used but in Gen 3 there's a serpent who comes to deal shrewdly with God's people and come against God's plan. We know this is Satan from other passages,<sup>9</sup> he brings sin into the world, and in 3:15 God talks to that ancient serpent, the devil: '*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*' This is the first promise God makes when the world first falls in sin. It's how sin and Satan will lose.

It's the promise that drives all the other promises we've seen, and will drive redemptive history.

**It sets up the epic battle between good and evil, Satan and the Savior who will defeat him**  
v. 15 starts with the enmity between the evil one and the woman, then it adds '*and between your offspring and her offspring.*' Eve's first 2 offspring or children were Cain and Abel, and Cain had such enmity towards Abel, he killed him, maybe by a blow to the head? When God says '*your offspring*' to Satan, who is that? 1 John 3 says '*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil...We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.*' Why such enmity? He was of the evil one, a child of the devil.

**What drives men to murder a brother or a baby isn't natural, it's supernatural, it's Satan**  
Jesus told evil leaders in Jn 8:44 '*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning...and the father of lies*' (LSB).

That's why there was such enmity between them and this Jesus, born of a woman. It starts back in Genesis and Exodus where Pharaoh lies ('those Jews are gonna join our enemies in war'; the father of lies is behind that). He's behind Haman and Herod

and Hitler and Hamas terrorists today trying to wipe out Jews. This is devilish in v. 16, this plan to murder newborn offspring.

It's no less Satanic to murder pre-born offspring, which is done today when they see if it's a boy or a girl (they can just see it in the womb now). Sex-selection abortion, partial birth killing, China's 1-child policy largely wiping out 1 gender for a generation—all that has demonic roots. The father of lies drives plans against parenthood with lies like 'this is just reproductive health care, we care, pro-life people just want to control women, or kill in back alleys,' etc. The lying murderer from the beginning crushes unborn heads, but v. 15 tells Satan a Son will be born who *will crush your head*. That's 1 translation<sup>10</sup> but it fits Rom 16:20, crushing Satan underfoot. One to come will have the serpent wound His heel, but in return the devil gets a headshot deathblow.

**This is Jesus who Kevin DeYoung calls 'the snake crusher'; Jews call Him the Messiah** Notice v. 15 ends with a singular offspring/seed, '*HE will bruise/crush your head.*' A male child will deal a crushing defeat even as the serpent bites back at the heel with deadly venom. This is the word in Gen 15 where God promises Abraham's *seed/offspring* will be afflicted in another land 400 years, but that *seed* will grow and be fruitful and multiply as many as stars in the sky. The seed promise expands in Gen 22 '*in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*'

**So all this isn't just for the nation of Israel, it's for all nations, it's for us** Gal 3 quotes Gen 15 and says whether Jew or not, '*if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*' (v. 6, 28-29 NKJV). Gal 3:8 '*the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed"...*<sup>16</sup> **Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made.** He does not say, [now quoting Gen 22] "*And to seeds,*" as of many, but as of one, "*And to your Seed,*" who is Christ [the singular Seed of the woman fulfills the promise for us, v. 22 adds]...*that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*'

**So we get to stand as children of the promise, by faith, we're Abraham's seed and heir** Father Abraham had many sons spiritually. I am one of them, so are you, if Jesus is your Lord. This is our spiritual family story, too. The blessing of all nations with Israel was always a part of God's multi-ethnic family plan, and still is. The gospel was preached to Abraham in this and in Gen 3:15 the first gospel was preached to Satan: a seed of woman will come, you may pierce His heel on the cross so He dies, but death will lose its serpent sting as He rises and defeats you. Satan knows that promise and tries to kill the male seed here and later baby boys in Bethlehem.

**He's the cult leader of the culture of death, we need to rescue from that cult** The devil tries to defeat God's promise in the first book of the OT and first book of the NT with Herod murdering every little 'he/him.' To the last book of the Bible that enmity rages on. Rev 12 is a vision with Genesis/Joseph dream imagery (sun, moon), 12 stars probably for 12 tribes, a woman with them (symbol of Israel/God's

people) about to give birth. The old serpent-dragon is the devil who stands before the mom in labor ready to destroy the child as it comes out that birth canal. It says it's a male child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron who the devil can't defeat, and the woman flees that serpent into the wilderness with Exodus imagery. Satan can't destroy Israel or her Messiah, Jesus defeats him at the cross and finishes the job at the end.

**In Rev 20 the serpent is chained like a slave 1000 years, then afflicted in a lake of fire forever**  
So go back to Ex 1 but that's some biblical theology behind the diabolical command to wait to see if the Israelite woman gives birth to a male child, and if so, destroy that life. Pharaohs loved serpents, his symbol and crown was a cobra. We'll see later his serpent staffs, black magic, and occult idolatry, and how men who are racist and antisemitic are Satanic. But these women resist the serpent crown of Egypt and the enmity between him and God's children. <sup>17</sup> *But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.*

**God's unstoppable promises continue, we'll continue that story next time**  
There's ethical questions, but no question the theological point is God defeats evil and the evil one. <sup>20</sup> *So God dealt well with the midwives. And **the people multiplied and grew very strong.***

This isn't just for OT times, we read in the NT '*the churches...walking in the fear of the Lord ...were multiplied...the word of God grew and multiplied*' (Acts 9:31, 12:24 NKJV). The Greek OT word in Exodus for fruitful/increase is used in Acts 6:7 for the word and church that it says '*flourished*' (HCSB), '*increased rapidly / greatly*' (ESV / NASB), '*the number of the disciples did multiply in Jerusalem exceedingly; a great multitude*' (YLT). Opposition arose (v. 8), but can't stop the promise of Jesus '*I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*' This should encourage us when things get worse, our promise-keeping Lord will win

**Jesus wins in the end and He promises to be with His church to the end**  
Charles Spurgeon applied this: 'The early persecutions in Judea promoted the spread of the gospel...Those terrible and bloody persecutions under the Roman Emperor by no means stayed the progress of the gospel; but strangely enough seemed to press forward for the crown of martyrdom. The church probably never increased at a greater ratio than as when her foes were most fierce to assail and most resolute to destroy her.... The Reformation ... never went on so prosperously as when it was most vigorously opposed... Be patient, then, my brethren, amidst the persecutions or trials you may be called upon to bear; and be thankful that they are so often overruled for the growth of the church, the spread of the gospel, and the honor of Christ.'<sup>11</sup>

We'll look more at these women next time and 3 more women in ch 2 who God uses to defeat this sinful man and his demonic plan. But look to the Savior as we go. v. 11 says they afflicted with heavy burdens, but there's another promise of Messiah in Isa 53 who would be afflicted to bear our burdens. He would receive stripes like a slave, but they would heal us. He was bruised and wounded for our sins as a substitute. He would die but rise and then see His seed/offspring.

He came for the oppressed and depressed, for sufferers and strugglers who look to Him by faith.

He says in the gospels *'my burden is light...come unto me all who labor and are heavy-laden.'* Unlike the ruthless Pharaoh, Jesus says *'I will give you rest.'* Sinners say *'come let us,'* but the Savior says *'come unto me,'* and He promises *'the one who comes to me I will never cast out.'*

Come humbly repentantly to Jesus, knowing He said hatred makes you guilty of committing murder in your heart. He promises forgiveness and freedom if you come in true saving faith.

The NT tells us *'all the promises of God find their Yes'* in Jesus, and *'He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises...'*<sup>12</sup> Hebrews says in Christ it's *'much more excellent'* than the old covenant, because it's *'enacted on better promises.'* Jesus *'is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance ... Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for he who promised is faithful.** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...'* (8:6, 9:15, 10:23-25).

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 16–17.

<sup>3</sup> *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 140.

<sup>4</sup> v. 1-2, 6 NIV.

<sup>5</sup> 46:2-3, translated 'bring you back.'

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 24:60 NIV84.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 22:17.

<sup>8</sup> Ryken, 34–35.

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 12:9.

<sup>10</sup> NIV84.

<sup>11</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, "Prosperity Under Persecution," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (No. 997) (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1971), 17:352, 353.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20, 2 Peter 1:4.