

Exodus-The Book of Entering by Exiting

Title

The book title “Exodus” can be traced to the Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate which first assigned the title to the book. The word “exodus” is from the Greek word *exodos* which, by definition, means “exit” or “departure.” The Hebrew title, “names”, is from the first line of the book, “These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob” (1:1). This title implies that Exodus is the sequel to what previously followed, Genesis.

Authorship, Date & Setting

While Exodus does not directly refer to Moses as its author, he is understood to be the author of the Pentateuch and, thus, Exodus. Exodus 24:4 demonstrates that Moses obeyed the Lord’s instructions to “write all the words of the Lord.” Numbers 33:2 records that it was Moses who wrote of the beginnings of Israel’s journey. In Exodus 17:14, Moses is commanded to write God’s word. Further, Jesus affirmed in Mark 12:26 that Exodus 3:6 is a part of “the book of Moses.” Also, in Mark 7:10, Jesus ascribes Exodus 20:12 and 21:17 to Moses.

The date of the Pentateuch’s authorship by Moses is 1446-1200 B.C. In dating the Pentateuch, there are various positions as to the exact date of the exodus. The two dominant “schools of thought” are 1446 B.C. and 1260 B.C. Whatever the exact date, Moses was 80 years old when he began to lead Israel out of Egypt. He was Egyptian in nationality but Jewish by ethnicity. He was “learned in all wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). The setting of Exodus in Egypt is set under Egypt’s *Eighteenth Dynasty*, an especially strong period in Egypt’s history as an empire. This *Eighteenth Dynasty* began under Amose I who revitalized the economy as well as the army. As a superpower, Egypt’s borders were at their most expansive points during this period of time. The book begins with the Jews under Egyptian slavery. The nation is there because Joseph brought his family there during the famine (Gen. 48:1-50:26).

Purpose

The purpose of Exodus is a narrative detailing that God remembers his covenant with his people while rescuing them out of Egyptian bondage and providing covenant instruction. Amazingly, God will tabernacle with his people. It is the fulfillment of the promise, “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you...and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7-8). The great number of descendants promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:5) will begin with 70 persons in Egypt (Ex. 1:1-6). These persons will multiply and become numerous (Ex. 1:7). Further, Exodus will document the rise of Moses, the enslavement of Israel, the wilderness journey and the entrance into the Promised Land. Of course, Exodus will begin to unfold the partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. This will happen in as Israel grows and multiplies in populace, and also in its inheritance of the Land. God is the leading character who is seen as upholding His chosen leader and nation through indomitable circumstances.

Exodus & the Pentateuch

With both historical and theological groundwork laid in Genesis, Exodus will mark the introduction of God's law (Exod. 19-24). As narrative, Exodus demonstrates how the sons of Jacob grew into the people of Israel (1:8). Throughout the first part of the book, Israel is seen as receiving the blessings and partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21). The second part of the book demonstrates the covenant given, broken and renewed.

Structure of Exodus

Exodus is easily divided into five sections. The first section covers the departure of Israel out of Egypt (chpts. 1-18). The second section concerns the giving of the Law, the Old Covenant (chpts. 19-24). The third section concerns the building and use of the Tabernacle (chpts. 25-31). The fourth section demonstrates the holiness of God and the consequences of breaking the covenant (chpts. 32-34). The fifth section deals with the construction of the Tabernacle (chpts. 35-40).

Major Themes

The Law-The Law is covenant instruction that defines the parameters of the covenant relationship (Deut. 4:6-8). Israel is given the Law by Moses at Mount Sinai and in the plains of Moab (Exod. 19:1-24:18). The Law gives the guidelines of how God's chosen people can live in covenant relationship with God. These stipulations bind God and the people together in an increasingly intimate covenant relationship (6:1-8). The Law reveals that God is holy in his nature and thus requires holiness from his people (19:1-20:21). When the Law is broken, God graciously renews the covenant (Exod. 34:10-35).

Special Revelation-It is in Exodus that God declares his covenant character as he unveils his glory (34:1-10). The attributes of God are on display as God will reveal himself through tabernacling with Israel. At the burning bush, he demonstrates his holiness (3:1-22). At the Red Sea, God reveals his sovereign majesty as Creator (14:1-31). The writing of the Law with the giving of the Ten Commandments unveils the revelatory Word of God, which will be God's means of communicating his will (19:1-24:18). God is seen as revealing himself by writing the Law with his own finger (20:22-23:19). Failure to obey his law brings God's wrath, yet it is followed by his forgiving mercy (32:1-34:35).

The Tabernacle-After reaffirming his covenant, the Tabernacle is where Israel's covenant God meets with his people and is approachable through sacrifice (25:1-30:38). The ceremonial regulations act as a vivid reminder that God is holy and they must approach him in the way he requires (35:1-40:38). The Tabernacle and its associated regulations remind people of God's holiness. Moses himself will oversee the construction of the Tabernacle (40:16-33) and consecrate the priests for service in the Tabernacle (40:9-15). Ultimately, God's glory resides on the Tabernacle (40:34-38). If God's people will approach him as he designates, then he promises to tabernacle with his people (29:43-46; 40:34-38). Under the New Covenant, Jesus is God permanently tabernacling with mankind (Jn. 1:14-18).

Moses- His life story is one of privilege, tragedy and triumph all by the providential hand of God (2:1-25). His consecration at the burning bush sets the tone for all that lies ahead (3:1-4:17). Moses acts as God's

mediator rescuing Israel from bondage (4:1-12:42) and the mediator of the Old Covenant (Deut. 18:15). He also acts as a shepherd to the people of God as he leads them through the wilderness to the Land of Promise (3:10-12). He is constantly reminding Israel of their covenant relationship with God as he seeks to hold them to faithfulness. Such is his love for Israel and their covenant, that he refuses to have a new nation formed from his own descendants, while all the while pleading for Israel as an intercessor (32:7-14). So close is his relationship with God, that God chooses to reveal his glory to Moses (33:17-23). He knew God face to face as a man knows a friend (33:11).

Salvation-Exodus reveals that God is a saving God- "...The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..." (34:6). First, salvation is demonstrated in a most personal and real way with God's redemption and subsequent restoration of Moses (2:1-3:22). Second, the Old Covenant symbolism in the Tabernacle points to New Covenant fulfillment in Jesus. For example, the continual sprinkling of the blood of animals will be superseded by the blood of Christ (Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2). Another example is that just as God instituted the feast of the Passover and the Passover lamb, now under the New Covenant, the Lamb of God will be our Passover sacrifice (Exod. 12; Mt. 26:17-30; Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7).