

Monday, 15 January 2024

Big Gospel Words: Salvation

Exodus Ch. 6:1-8 Ch. 9 & Ch. 12 & Ch. 15

Introduction

I'm sure many of us will have been keeping tabs on some of the movements of Donald Trump in America. You may have seen a video called 'God Made Trump.'

Well, the video is a short montage in which it says "God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker,'" "So God gave us Trump."

The blanket statement from the news was that this was the majority view of American evangelicals.

Well, as we come to look in the book of Exodus this morning we do see that God points someone to be a caretaker, a leader of his people. But it certainly wasn't the self-proclaimed Donald Trump.

In fact, he was a timid leader with no gifts of public speaking and history that he was ashamed of. Moses was called by God to lead his people.

This morning we read through Exodus 6:1-8, and we will spend some time reflecting on that passage but this morning I want to give us a quick run-through of the first 15 chapters of the book of Exodus.

The Story of Exodus

To do this I've put together a list of ten words beginning with O to allow us to have a whistle-stop tour of the Story of Exodus. So if you open to Exodus 1, try and follow through, use the heading and see an overview of the story.

Our First O is ...

1. Origins

In chapters one and two we hear about the origins of God's people, the Israelites in the land of Egypt, who are living under oppression from Pharaoh. We also hear about Moses being born, he is saved by being put in a basket in the river Nile because Pharaoh has put out a command to kill all the Israelites' baby boys.

2. Out

Moses grows up in the Pharaoh's palace, being saved from the river. But eventually murdered an Egyptian slave driver because of how he was treating an Israelite slave. As a result, he flees Egypt and goes to a place called Midian.

3. Ordained

After 40 years in Midian. Moses encounters a burning bush in chapter 3, through which God speaks and calls him to be a leader of the Israelites.

4. Obligation

Moses returns to Egypt, following God's call, but unsure and nervous.

5. Oath

In chapter 6, which we read together earlier, we see God declare promises, or make an oath, with his people, that he will be their God and that he will bring salvation.

6. Outbreak

Moses follows God's call to go to Pharaoh and ask that he set his people free. Pharaoh repeatedly said No in response to Moses, hardening his own heart and having his heart hardened by God. Moses returns again and again as God brings 10 plagues in total. Starting with the river Nile turning to blood, frogs, Gnats, and then Flies covering the land. After that the livestock of the Egyptians is struck down, painful boils break out amongst the people of Egypt, a huge storm of hailstones follows, and then a swarm of locust destroy all the crops. Followed by the ninth Plague, in which darkness covered the land.

7. Oblivion

The worst plague of all is still left to come. One last time Moses ask Pharaoh to set his people free. But still, his request isn't granted. In this last plague, God will kill every firstborn son in each household across the whole land.

8. Outrageous

But God in his love and protection offers a way of salvation for those who know him. It's an outlandish act of mercy, in the face of deserved judgment. God says that if a lamb is sacrificed in the firstborn's place and if blood from that lamb is sprinkled on the doorframes of each house then his judgement will Passover that family and death will not come upon them. This was known as the Passover Lamb, a way of salvation for God's people.

9. Outward

As we get into chapter 12 we see that God does eventually deliver the Israelites from the grasp of Pharaoh. They are free to leave. Because God has demonstrated his power. They leave Egypt, cross the Red Sea and enter freedom.

10. Offering

Lastly, in Chapter 15, we see Moses leading God's people in an offering of Worship as they reflect on all God has done to bring them Salvation.

That is the Exodus 1 to 15 summed up in a nutshell.

This story shows us how God saved his people from Egypt. We see the purpose of God's work in chapter 14:31 'When the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him.' God doesn't just save his people from the oppressors but in fact, brings them to himself as a loving father.

We see God's character is built on being a God of Salvation.

This morning I have three small sections from Exodus 1-15 to look at. Chapter 6 reminds us of *God's promise of Salvation*. Chapter 12 shows us how *God delivers his People* and Chapter 15 lets us see how *God's people respond with Praise*.

God Promises Salvation (6:1-8)

'The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories' is a 2004 book written by Christopher Booker. In the book, he highlights 7 different plots that in some capacity at least make up most stories. Things like a rags-to-riches story, or comedy, quest, voyage and return.

These seven plot types could be used to show a story's archetype. What are the vital elements of a story? What patterns should writers follow to build their ideas on?

Well, God in his wisdom uses human authors to write the Bible and the story of Moses and the Exodus is the archetypal story of salvation. If we were to spend time working our way through the Old Testament we would come across multiple stories where God's people get themselves into trouble and God sends a specific person to help bring God's people out of the messy situation. Just read the book of Judges and you'll see that pattern repeating.

The first point this morning, that I'd like to highlight is that God Promises salvation. When reading through Chapter 6:1-8, I was struck by God's promises in those verses. I counted nearly twenty promises in different forms.

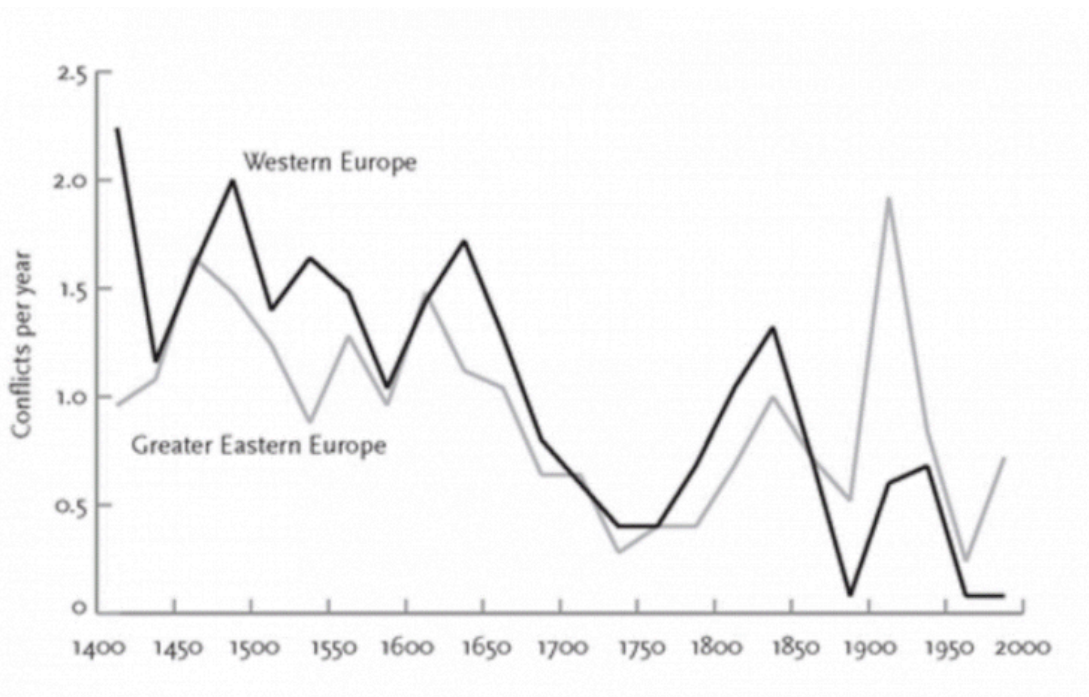
We see God declaring 'I am the Lord' or saying I will be your God. We see him recounting promises from the past. He says 'I established my covenant' in verse 4, meaning he will continue promises of land and possessions that he made historically. God also gives 7 future promises. Dealing with the work that God is about to do. Promises to remove oppression and injustice and bring his people to freedom from slavery.

God's character is full of being a promise keeper. Psalm 145 verse 13 says 'The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.'

So, God starts by making sure Moses understands that he is the giver and fulfiller of promises.

The story of Moses happened somewhere around 3500 to 3300 years ago. But these promises continue through ancient history and still hold truth today.

History has taught us that just because something is old it doesn't diminish its importance to us. We shouldn't just cancel it or forget about it.



Learning from history is important. This graph shows how over the last half a century there has been a gradual decline in war, despite what is happening in the world currently. But understanding history, has helped society develop.

Similarly, the promises from God are built upon one another. Promises from the Old Testament, Jesus' life and the rest of the New Testament are true and still hold firm.

God Delivers His People (12:21-23 + 31-32)

So what do these promises look like? Well, let's take a look at Chapter 12 of Exodus to see our second point. How God delivers his people.

The story of the Exodus is a roller coaster ride. A constant battle of wills between Pharaoh's heart being hard and Moses' plea to free his people.

There is a question to be asked about why doesn't God just bring his people out of Egypt after, say, the first plague.

Well, in a day and age where we want everything instantly, there could be some wisdom in taking the long route.

Let me tell you about my Tuesday morning. I realised two things that could have dangerous consequences. One of our mums and more groups were meeting at our house soon and that fact we were dangerously low on milk, meaning much-needed teas, coffee and hot chocolates were in danger of not being made. So I offered to cycle to the shop to get some more.

When I cycle I tend to track it on Strava, which is a fitness app. So here is the map from my cycle. I have highlighted where my house is and the coop is. It's about 1.5 kilometres away. I could have done that very easily, a few minutes there and back. But I went in the wrong direction. Out to the ring road, back into St Johns and eventually, after going back past my house I made it to the coop, got my milk and got back home ready for mums and more to enjoy their much-needed hot drinks.

Now, what was the point of that bizarre story? Well as a Trainee pastor, one important thing that Roy has taught me and Nathan is that we will spend a good deal of time sitting down. Either in our offices, in study or drinking coffee. So I tend to take longer cycling routes when going to different places to do more exercise.

Yes, my cycling route wasn't the quickest way to get to the milk but by cycling a longer route I'm benefitting the rest of the day and I've helped myself in the long run.

The point is this. God doesn't always choose the quickest route, but he does always choose the best. We may not see it like that when we are going through difficult circumstances in life but, as it says in Romans 8 'we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.'

God uses this story in Exodus to show us that God will deliver his people, he will bring salvation. But he does it in a way that shows us his glory.

In Chapter 9:14-16 it says '... I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'

God's purpose in the Exodus Story is to show how incredible God is and that he is worth following.

After seeing how powerful God is. We see that Chapter 12 shows us two ways in which God delivers his people.

Chapter 12:31-32. Shows us that finally, Pharaoh has relented. It says 'During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me."

The Israelites are finally free. They pack up their things and go. After 430 years of slavery in Egypt they can walk out.

God has physically delivered the Israelites from the Egyptian's grasp.

As we had our whistle-stop tour of the Story of Exodus we mentioned the ten plagues. The use of the 10 plagues shows everyone how powerful God is.

But the last plague shows us something important about the spiritual state of the Israelites, Egyptians and us now.

The last plague is seen in God's justice being pronounced over all the Egyptians and Israelites. Each firstborn son of each family is to die because of how sinful the nations are.

Why does the firstborn son have to die? Well...

Romans 6:23 says 'The wage for sin is death'. Sin is when we rebel against God, not listening to him, meaning our relationship with him is broken.

I'm sure everyone has heard the saying 'Let the punishment fit the crime'. Well, that's exactly what is happening here. The Bible clearly states that God is Holy, he can't look at Sin, and the punishment for sin is death.

What can fix that relationship, well the wages have to be met. So either we die or something dies in our place.

This is why God institutes the Passover Lamb for the Israelites. To offer a way in which something can die in place of the firstborn son.

Exodus 12:21-23 says 'Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.'

God's actions in saving his people from sin showed that salvation was not just the physical act of freedom from slavery but that the people of God needed to be spiritually reunited in a relationship with him.

What is the significance of the Passover Lamb for us then? Well, ultimately we are in the same situation as the Israelites were. We are sinful and have a broken relationship with God. Our punishment for sin should be death. We need something to take up our deserved punishment of death.

John 1:29 says "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John is talking about Jesus. The new Passover lamb. who will make us "holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Jesus came into this world, lived a perfect life, showed the world his power, and taught about how we can have a relationship with God once again.

God's route of salvation for all people was through the Lamb of God. The ultimate sacrifice. The perfect sinless Jesus, dieing on the Cross, in place of sinners, taking the sins of the world upon himself for all those who believe in him. So our debt is paid and we are free.

The story of the book of Exodus was a pattern or shadow of what was to come. Jesus saves those who believe in him.

John 3:16 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

Do you believe in Jesus?

We have to respond to that question...

God's people respond with Praise (15:2)

My last point is all about response and how God's people respond in Praise. They looked back at the journey that has been through and worshipped God.

Reflecting back is a really important practice. It's something that helps us see the faults in our past but also the good moments, things that we've been through and learnt about.

Some of the biggest learning curves for our modern nation have to be seen in the First and Second World Wars.

My Family recently acquired this interesting little display from someone who came to do some metal detecting at my parent's house. He had heard that a World War Two plane had crash-landed in the garden in 1941, in which 3 young soldiers died.

We have a few write-ups of the events that happened but a couple of comments stood out.

The man who came to use his metal detector and found the items in the display said 'Now, in a way we are keeping the memory of those poor lads alive.'

Another witness statement of the crash said this...

'Every time a plane goes by I always think of those men, young sons, husbands and fathers who died for us to keep our freedom'.

History has a lasting impact on people, on the present time and can shape our future.

And this was the same for the Israelites. They looked back and saw that God's promises had been fulfilled.

Back in Chapter 6, God gave three promises. *To be the Israelite's God, to save them from slavery and to bring freedom to a new land.*

In chapter 15, Moses and the Israelites remembered all this and responded by worshipping God.

Verse 2 says 'the Lord is my strength and my defence; he has become my Salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him'.

God's people respond with praise because of God's salvation promises coming true.

I love that line in the middle. 'He has become my salvation.'

It's a declaration. Can we say God has become my salvation?

As we come to a close this morning let me leave us with three things to think about in light of God's incredible hand of deliverance seen in the story of the Exodus and through Jesus, making a way for us to be saved.

Application

1. Be encouraged to look for the gospel when reading the Old Testament.

When we are reading some of the Old Testament stories it's often interesting to *ask how and when we see similarities to the Gospel message and of Jesus himself*. It's a great joy to see how the Old Testament and New Testament link up and see God's big picture come together.

2. Do we know Jesus to be our Passover lamb?

Jesus is the best Passover Lamb. He died in our place if we believe in him. He has done the work to take away our sins. Meaning we can have a relationship with God.

3. Do we respond by following Jesus and worshipping him?

Our response is key to this story. God is all about salvation. He wants people to be saved, and to have a relationship with him.

So firstly, what is your response to Jesus? Do you believe in him?

And then, following the example of Moses and the people of God.

Do we respond in worship to God for all he is and all he has done for us?