

# The Birth of a Nation

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It's a wonderful time tonight to be able to come to God's word. You know, two weeks ago and two days ago, we celebrated the birth of our church and I preached on the birth of a church on Sunday morning, October 19. As we come to Exodus, we get to see the birth of a nation and so we're seeing how God gives birth to different things to advance his purposes in the life of our church, sometimes in our experience and sometimes here from Scripture and it's a wonderful thing to be able to see the creative power of God at work and displayed in the word of God.

We come tonight in our survey of the Pentateuch to the second book of Moses, the book of Exodus, and the term "exodus" means "an exit; or a departure; or a going out," and it's very important for you to understand that Exodus is a continuation of the story that began in Genesis. They are not unrelated books. They are intimately connected to each other, in fact, the very first word of Exodus can be translated "and," showing the connection between Genesis and what follows in the 40 chapters of Exodus. Now, let me just remind you because it's really critical for what's going to come here this evening, that we saw in Genesis the prominence of the man Abraham. We saw God's promises to him and the permanence of those promises, and we saw that Abraham is found throughout the Scriptures; that there is a certain hinge of redemptive history that occurs based on the promises that God made to Abraham. Now, if that's true, we would expect to see that somehow reflected in the book that immediately follows in Exodus and, in fact, that's what we do.

Let me give you a little bit of a running start to the book of Exodus by looking back at Genesis for just a moment. You know and you remember that Abraham had one son to whom the promise was given and that was Isaac; he had Ishmael, but that's not pertinent for our purposes here tonight. There was Abraham and he gave birth to Isaac and Isaac gave birth to Jacob and Esau and the promise was to go through Jacob. You know these things, and Jacob had 12 sons and those 12 sons became the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. Now, as you're closing out the book of Genesis, you see that there is a limited number, a few score of descendants that wrap up the end of the book of Genesis and I want you to see this because it's really crucial. Genesis 46 is where I would have you turn. The book of Genesis records that there were 70 descendants of Jacob that were in Egypt at the end of Genesis. Look at Genesis 46:26. I like to just highlight these verses that are just particularly key and get orienting us toward the message of redemptive

history. Genesis 46:26, "All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all, and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy." Seventy people at the end of Genesis there in Egypt.

Now, as you know, Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt. He became essentially the Prime Minister of Egypt, was number 2 in command and proved to be the man through whom God delivered the children of Israel, and as you come to the end of the book, Joseph dies and Genesis ends on a very cold note. The pun is not intended to here. Look at Genesis 50:26. I want you to notice the last five words of Genesis, "So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt." The book of Genesis ends in a coffin in Egypt. There is something cold and dramatic about that and here the people of Israel, the people of the promise, are 70 as you come to the end of Genesis; Joseph dies and what I want you to see is it's this fragile clan in a foreign land that are the ones who have inherited the promises made to Abraham and this situation looks very fragile and desperate. It would only take one good round of a bad case of the flu going through, humanly speaking, and it could wipe them out. Seventy people is nothing, so to speak, and so you have the promises of God resting in this fragile place and the man of preeminence, Joseph, has died and now is in a coffin in Egypt. It's at that point that the book of Exodus opens and Exodus shows how God took this fragile clan and gave birth to a nation set apart to serve him.

And I want to show you four different things out of the book of Exodus. This is the only message we're going to spend on Exodus in this survey and so obviously we're bouncing off the high points here. But first of all, what I want you to see is the historical development. That's point 1: the historical development of the people in Egypt. This is very, very fascinating and Exodus, I feel a little bit justified in blowing through Exodus like this because the book of Exodus blows through 400 years of history like that, and so it's very interesting to see how much of an overview it gives to the history. But what we find in Exodus is that this fragile group, this fragile clan of people who are the inheritors of the promises of God, multiply greatly in that foreign land. Look at verse 7, Exodus 1:7, "But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them."

Now, one thing that should come to your mind even though it's not explicitly stated here in Exodus 1:7, is that, and this is one of the ways that you start to see Scripture connecting together, you start to see the big picture of things, this is the kind of thing that is precisely what God promised to Abraham. He said, "I will give you descendants that are greater than the numbers of the stars. You won't be able to number the dust of the earth, you won't be able to number your descendants." This is what you would expect to happen based on the promises that God made to Abraham back in Genesis 12 and 15 and 17 and all of those passages that we looked at. Here we see summarized in chapter 1, verse 7, the mathematical expansion of this fragile clan so that there are obviously descendants to continue on and to be the recipients of the promise that God made to Abraham.

But it's not that simple. The numbers increased but the problems increased with the numbers. They were enslaved to the greatest nation on earth at the time. Look at verse 8 and we're going to read a few verses here. "Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." There you go. You see a connection between Exodus and Genesis. The book of Exodus assumes you know the story of Genesis so you couldn't pick up Exodus and just study it independently. None of it would make sense without the context of Genesis. "A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.' So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them."

We'll stop there. There is more to the story, of course, but think about this, this is a pretty bleak picture that it paints here at the end of that passage that I just read. They are under the affliction of hard labor and slavery in the hands of the nation that has them, that encompasses them, that rules over them; their lives were miserable. Watch this: spiritually speaking, you could very well say that they were in a coffin in Egypt. They were in a spiritual coffin. They had no freedom. They were afflicted. They were slaves to taskmasters. And so here they are, they are multiplying greatly but they're in slavery and as the Scriptures here say that they have multiplied and they're growing and growing, well, you might ask, "Well, how many of them are there at this point?" Well, based on the text of the Scripture, you can turn over to Exodus 12, I just want to show you something real quickly here. Exodus 12, how many of them are there at this point? Many writers believe that the numbers should be placed at 2-3 million. They were a group of people the size of the metropolitan area of Cincinnati, Ohio, is how great they were.

Exodus 12:37, "Now the sons of Israel," this is at the time of the actual physical exodus that we're going to look at in a little bit, "Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children." So writers, you know, as we do the math on this and we think about there are 600,000 men, there are women, there are children that are alongside, it's pretty easy to get to the number 2-3 million people, 2-3 million Israelites that were living inside this spiritual coffin in the land of Egypt. That's about 400 years later. Now, actually I jumped ahead there. If 2-3 million sounds like a fantastic number to you, seems too high, seems too incredible, well, you do need to remember that there has been a long period of time that has passed since the end of Genesis by the time that we're looking at these numbers. Look at verse 40 in Exodus, not Genesis, Exodus 12:40, "Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."

Now, I just want you to think. I want you to see how reasonable the Scriptures are; how evident it is that these numbers are appropriate given the time frame that we're talking about. What Scripture is saying is that from the end of Genesis, in Genesis 46, to this time in Exodus 12, they went from 70 people to 2-3 million people. That sounds like an awful lot but think about it this way, this will really help you embrace the Scriptures and have confidence in the truthfulness of the word of God: 400 years ago, 407 years ago basically, was the settlement of Jamestown on our shores with probably a comparable number of people that were in Egypt at the time or of the descendents that went in. Very small settlement. Very few people that are there and now here we are, flash forward 407 years, almost precisely the exact time frame that is defined in Exodus for the children of Israel and in 2013 last year, the United States census reported that there were 316.1 million people living coast to coast plus the two states of Alaska and Hawaii. From Jamestown to today basically, let's round it up, 320 million people and Scripture says that in the time of Israel over 400 years they went from 70 to 2-3 million people, that's perfectly reasonable. There is a geometric expansion as the generations multiply from one age to the next.

So this is all, all of these numbers make perfect sense. All of this adds up, particularly when you remember this: God had made a promise to Abraham. God said, "You're going to have multiplied descendents more than can be numbered." Well, to say that there's 2-3 million would simply be a fulfillment of the promise of the omniscient, omnipotent God that he made to his servant and he kept it. God simply kept his promise and so there is this multiplied generation of descendents of Abraham that are in a spiritual coffin in Egypt. That's great. God kept his promise. But there's an aspect of it that's missing, isn't there? God didn't simply promise to Abraham that he would have a whole bunch of descendents, what did he promise? He said, "A great nation will come from you. A great nation. You will give birth to what will become a great nation." Well, look, the numbers were there, 2-3 million is an impressive progeny to leave behind to the world, but an enslaved, disorganized and dispirited people are not a nation and that's the problem that the book of Exodus is going to address. Think about it, it's not simply, the largest group of people is not necessarily a nation. Here in this time at the beginning of the book of Exodus, the descendents of Abraham had no land of their own; they were not self-governing; they had no recognized leader; they had no laws of their own; and even their religion was not formalized. They were a great mass of people but there was no organization. There was no land. There was no way that you would call them a nation particularly when they were in slavery. So picture, if you will, picture being a human leader having to bring a nation out of that mess. There's no way. This is humanly impossible because Egypt is the greatest nation on the face of the earth at this time and they are hostile to this people and there's nothing that they can do about it. They are humanly weak despite their great numbers.

Now, that's a little sense of the historical development that's in place here at the start of Egypt. It's a masterful unfolding story that comes from the hand of Moses and with this historical development in place in our minds, is what I mean by that, it's mentally in place; we've got a little bit of a sense of what has transpired here, a lot of time, a lot of people, a lot of births, a lot of chaos, a lot of sorrow, a lot of slavery, a lot of bricks, a

couple of million people can probably generate a lot of bricks. But with this historical development in place, something now occurs and if you're taking notes as I hope you are, point 2 this evening, I want to show you the spiritual development. The spiritual development and this is so exciting. I'm glad I'm not standing too close to an electric socket because I'd probably short myself out here. This is electric what we are about to see and I know from sad personal experience how easy it is to read through the Scriptures and just miss the significance of things like what we are about to see. God made promises to Abraham in the book of Genesis. Moses wrote Genesis. Moses wrote Exodus. It's a continuing narrative and so if that's true, and it is, then we would expect to see the promises that God made to Abraham starting to bubble to the surface here in Exodus as an explanation for what you know happens next and that's exactly what we find. The time here in Exodus had now come for God, watch this, for God to manifest in time and space history his faithfulness to his promises to Abraham. The God of the Bible is a covenant keeping, promise enforcing God and that is what we are going to see over the next few minutes as we look at some passages in Exodus.

Look back now, look back to Exodus 2. I just think this is marvelously exciting. Exodus 2:23. Moses had just been born and in fairness, if we had the time we would do a series on Moses like we did on Abraham. We are not going to be able to do that this time through but look at chapter 2, verse 23, "Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God." Verse 24, "So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Here they are in slavery, here they are at this crucial juncture as Scripture says, "God remembered the covenant." Four hundred years had passed, a time almost exactly equivalent to Jamestown in our personal history has passed, and yet here God is remembering the promises that he had made centuries earlier to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Verse 25, "God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them."

Now, understand what's going on here. When it says that God remembered his covenant, it's not like something occurred to God that he had forgotten in the intervening time. That's not the meaning of the sense of what Moses is saying here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To remember the covenant is a way of saying that God is about to act in a way which men will see as the fulfillment of the promises of that covenant. Men are going to see what is about to happen and it will seem like, from human perception, that what God had forgotten, he now remembered and acted upon. Actually from the divine perspective, God is simply acting on his timetable to fulfill what he had intended to do all along but from a human perspective after a long dark period of silence, all of a sudden God bursts onto the scene and things start to happen. I would venture to say if you've been a Christian for any length of period of time at all, you can look back on your life and remember times where something similar on a much smaller scale happened with you. You went through a dark period of discouragement. It seemed like God had abandoned you and then things began to occur and the freshness of the work of God in your life became apparent again, and when in your time of darkness you were tempted to say and perhaps some of you did say, "God has forgotten me," well, then when things start to turn and you start to see the favorable hand of God again, it's as if he has remembered. Well,

he never did forget. Your perception was perhaps clouded but God never did forget and so there's not a sense in which he actually remembered in the sense that we suddenly remember where we put the car keys. It's not like that. Rather, it's just a matter from human perspective, it looks like God remembered; it's a way of saying that God is about to manifest his faithfulness to the covenant that he made to Abraham. And you know what happens and that's what's part of what makes this so exciting is that as you come to the end of Exodus 2, you know that there is something big that's about to happen.

Now, that's not all. If that was the only place that Abraham had been mentioned, it would have been enough to prove the point that the promise to Abraham becomes a hinge between this large mass of people in slavery now becoming a people delivered and set free, as it were. If it was just Exodus 2, that would be enough but Scripture makes this so abundantly clear. The passage that I read earlier, Exodus 3, look at verse 6 with me again. Exodus 3:6, and now I just want you to start to see the prominence of these promises that God made to Abraham so that you'll see that this is interwoven in the unfolding of the biblical narrative.

Exodus 3:6, "He said also," God said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now, you know why that matters. This isn't a random reference of God as if he was the God of Tom, Harry and Bill. This is an echo back where God is saying, "I am still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I remember the promises that I made to them and so, Moses, as you come near to this burning bush, let me tell you who it is that you're looking into. I am the same God who made those promises to your forefathers centuries ago."

And in chapter 3, verse 14, "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" Moses said, "What's your name? What shall I tell to the sons of Israel?" So God answers him and he said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' God, furthermore, said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons 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 this is My memorial-name to all generations. Go,'" verse 16, "'and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.' So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'""

Look, it's hard to imagine what would be going through the minds of the Israelites who were conscious of their history at that time. Invoking Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, brings all of those promises to the forefront and the God who made those promises has supernaturally revealed himself in a burning bush that was not consumed and said, "I'm the one who made those promises and I remember and I see your affliction and I am about to bring you to the land that I promised." So they're on the pivot point, they are on the fulcrum of redemptive history and all of a sudden God is reminding them of all of the promises that he made and he said, "Now is the time for those to be fulfilled." They're

going to see this played out with their own eyes in their own lifetime. This is magnificent and it is magnificent for us even today to look back and to read this and to know that this is an accurate representation of what actually happened because we have in our hands the inspired, inerrant word of God that actually tells us about time and space history. And as we read it, having studied Genesis like we have, we're starting to understand why great movements of history happen. It's simply because God chose a man named Abraham and made unconditional promises to him and said, "I promise you, Abraham, I'm going to do this. I am going to show grace to you. I am going to be good and kind to you and your descendents in a way which will turn you into a blessing to all the nations." So as we read Exodus, we understand that there is this great power coming to bear on 2-3 million people simply so that God will keep the promise that he first made back in Genesis. This explains the course of history. God is about to deliver the sons of Israel. He is about to create a nation out of nothing.

Look at Exodus 6. We're still not done with these promises, with this spiritual development, and you see the multiplied repetition of these promises to Abraham so that you're not supposed to miss this. We're supposed to see the connection and even if we miss it when we're reading casually through Scripture, it is right there on the pages and it's obvious for us to see. Exodus 6:2, actually, start in verse 1, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.'" Verse 2, "God spoke further to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,'" there it is again. That's the third time in just over five chapters. "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. Furthermore," and so God says, "I made this promise," now in verse 5, "I see the problem, the promise and the problem," verse 5, "Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant." In other words, "I'm about to act to fulfill my promise to resolve this problem that my people find themselves in." Verse 6, "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.'" Verse 8, "'I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.'" He could swear by no one higher so he certified it by a reference to his own name. "I promised. This is my name. What I have said I will do, I will do."

So that's the spiritual development and so as you read this narrative in Exodus, as you read through Exodus, you should always remember why these things are happening. Oh, that's so important. Do you know how I know this is important? It's italicized in my notes. That's right, this is so important that it's in italics in my notes. You must remember why these things are happening. Don't just read that they happened, understand why they are happening and understand it with this simple perspective in mind: why does the

whole book of Exodus happen? Why the whole 40 chapters covering centuries of time, 4 1/2 centuries of time roughly speaking, why does that whole thing happen? Because God is keeping a promise that he made to Abraham. This is a spectacular manifestation of God's loyalty and faithfulness and the certainty of his truthfulness to his word. He doesn't forget. He does what he says that he's going to do and with what we're going to see in the time that we have remaining, understand that the tree that you see in what's left in our time together tonight, has its roots in those promises to Abraham. Just like we studied over the past few weeks, now we start to see the fruit of those promises.

So we've seen the historical development of how the people of Israel multiplied in Egypt. We see the spiritual development by which we mean as redemptive history takes its next step forward, we understand that it's an outworking of the promise that God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Genesis. It's also clear in the text. Now, what we're going to look at, point 3, is the physical deliverance. The physical deliverance. So we've seen the historical development; the spiritual development; and now we're looking at the physical deliverance and, quite frankly, I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on this here this evening because I know that you know the story and we have to cover another 34 chapters in 20 minutes. That's going to be kind of tight so I trust that you'll bear with me here.

The physical deliverance. The book of Exodus tells about a physical exodus that God accomplished on behalf of his people and there is a physical dimension, there is an outward circumstantial dimension to the deliverance that God gave to the people of Israel that the book of Exodus describes. First of all, and I'm stating things that are very obvious here, first of all, God relocated them geographically. He literally moved them from Egypt to the land of Canaan or into the wilderness, I should say, ultimately they ended up in Canaan. You know how that unfolded, but God is relocating them geographically. He is moving them to a different location in the Exodus and that's part of the deliverance. They were not in the Promised Land, God is going to move them so that they can take possession of the Promised Land ultimately and he brought them out of Egypt to a land, watch this, to a land which could ultimately sustain their national existence. There had to be a place for them to settle down and live and have food and to do what people do with their lives. They needed to be in a geographic place where that could happen and that's what God is doing in the book of Exodus. You know, if you've ever made a cross-country move or even a local move, you know that there's a lot of work to that. You hire a truck or two depending on how much stuff you have, and you're packing it all up and you move and it's a big deal to move one family. God is doing the numerical equivalent of relocating the Cincinnati Metropolitan area here. It's phenomenal to think about from that perspective.

Exodus 3:8, talking about the physical deliverance, God says to Moses, he says, "I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them up," here's what I want you to see, "from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey." So this is, I'm making a really simple point here. Don't think you're missing anything because you're not. You're saying, "I could say that." Well, sure you could. It's because it's that simple. From this land to that land, there's a physical



dimension, there's a relocation to what happened to those people and you know how God did it. He compelled as we saw earlier, he compelled Pharaoh to let them go. Pharaoh didn't want to lose the workforce but God compelled it to happen. Look at Exodus 3:19, "I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand," which is a way of saying, "I will exercise My power," "I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go."

So summarizing the next 10 chapters, give or take, God sent 10 plagues of increasing severity by the hand of Moses and it culminated in the death of every firstborn in Egypt. Look at Exodus 12:29. I'm assuming you know the story intervening so there you go. Exodus 12:29, "Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck 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 cattle. Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, 'Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said.'" Israel didn't lose anyone this way. They splattered the blood on their door mantle and the death passed them over, as you know, manifesting that God had separated Israel out, that God was protecting them. As he was judging Egypt, he passed over Israel and judged Egypt, showing clearly and distinctly, "These are my people. These I protect, you I judge."

So they went out and God guided them by a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Look at Exodus 13:21, "The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." And so God as he delivers the people, has manifested himself in this pillar which they are to follow and which is going to lead them out of the land of Egypt into the land that he had promised them. So there is this supernatural manifestation of divine power, of incalculable might. He generates these massive plagues on an entire nation so that Pharaoh finally gives in and says, "I give up. Go. I just have to get out from under these plagues"; supernaturally working to turn the mind of Pharaoh so that they are free to go. Then a supernatural manifestation of his presence so that he leads them and shows them and directs them where to go. This is all magnificent. There is miracle after miracle taking place, true miracles. True miracles, not the resolution of back pain at a Benny Hinn concert. This is the real stuff. And you know what happened, God led them through the Red Sea.

Let's look at this and spend a little time here. Scripture refers back to this again and again. In Exodus 14, they are on the edge of the Red Sea and the Egyptian army is bearing down on them. They're between a rock and a hard place, so to speak, and in verse 13 of Exodus 14, again, notice this, notice this, this is a side point, this is a tangent, this is a side boxcar that we're getting off into here, notice that the clan was fragile at the end of Genesis. There's just a few of them and they're in Egypt and their leader was now in a coffin in Egypt and then they are in slavery and they're under this bondage of the great world

nation at that time, and they could not release themselves from it and it seems like the promises to Abraham, can they really be fulfilled? Go back even further, Abraham has his hand raised against the son through whom the line was supposed to continue and God holds the hand, but we are just moments away from Isaac being sacrificed. There are 70 and they are in Egypt; they are nowhere near the land that God had promised them to be. Four hundred years later, they are multiplied but they are in slavery and now here they are, they've been delivered by plagues and they're up against the wall of water and the world's greatest army is bearing down on them and there is no place to go. So you see as you read through the historical narrative of this, when you're mindful of the promises that God made to Israel and you put yourself in the position of living it out in real time, you realize from a human perspective that it looks like the promises are in great danger of extinguishment; that the line and the nation is about to perish. But these people are sustained by the promise of God. They are protected by the power of God. So when it seems to be at its bleakest, God most manifests his great, faithful, powerful, good and certain character so that with that little side boxcar. What's a side boxcar in a sermon? I have no idea. Whatever a side boxcar is, you just heard it.

Exodus 14:13 now, "But Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.'" Verse 15, "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward.'" Are you kidding me? I can't swim. I'm afraid of the water. Verse 16, "As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen." Verse 19, this is really one of the great narratives in all of Scripture, isn't it? So compelling. Verse 19, "The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night." Verse 21, "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left." So picturesque. Such a stunning display of miraculous power. You could wish that you were there to have seen it. What does a wall of water that is not rushing through look like? What is it like to see water on either side of you with nothing holding it back and yet there you are walking on dry land? What is that like? Whatever it was, it was miraculous.

Now, in retrospect, if you're Pharaoh, you should look at that and stop. You should look at that and say, "This is something that I have never seen before. Let's not mess with it. This probably isn't going to turn out too good for us." Scripture says the Lord dealt with Pharaoh's heart so that he kept going. This is irrational by any other standard. Exodus

14:23, Pharaoh in a stunning, strategic miscalculation, followed after the people from a human perspective, assuming that he and his army too would follow through on dry land. Verse 23, "Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians.'" No kidding, guys. It's too late. Verse 26, "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left." The story has come full circle. It's over now. The greatest army on earth at that time, the equivalent of companies of Navy SEALs and Army Rangers, had just single-handedly been defeated by the God of Israel. Incredible. Such a stunning display of supernatural power manifested, and let's be real clear with each other, that actually happened exactly like Scripture said it did. This was a time and space historical event; real men born from real mothers perished in the sea at this as a result of this act of God. God single-handedly defeated the greatest army on the earth. Israel didn't raise a hand. All they did was walk at the command of God and they didn't even walk toward their enemy, they walked away from them, and they won. That's the physical deliverance. They are brought out of Israel; they are brought through the Red Sea safe on to the other side and that army was destroyed never to chase them again. Physically delivered. Relocated from one land to that land, from slavery out of slavery. A great physical external deliverance.

Now, we need to interpret this. Why? Why did that happen? We've said multiple times already that this is God's way of fulfilling his promise to Abraham but there's more to it. We can understand it more fully as we look at this fourth and final point here this evening: the spiritual deliverance. There is a spiritual deliverance that is taking place in Exodus as well. Remember, they were a disorganized mob of people. I don't mean mob, I mean a mass of people might be a better way to say it. They were a disorganized mass of people and now they are about to become a nation and there's a spiritual deliverance that is taking place here as well. When you read Exodus, you should understand and remember that God gave them this physical deliverance in order to achieve a spiritual end. He delivered Israel from slavery to be a nation. He delivered them from slavery to be a nation that belonged to him. There was a spiritual significance to this deliverance.

Look at Exodus 19:4. I love the Bible, don't you? Exodus 19:4, God picks up and reminds the people about what happened in the narrative that you and I just read a few moments ago. Exodus 19:4, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians," now watch how he starts to talk on a personal level and what this means for the sons of Israel as a

people, "and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine." He's saying, "You'll belong to me in a special unique way. Now that you have been delivered from Egypt, you will become my own possession. You will belong to me in a way that other nations do not." Verse 6, "'and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel. So Moses came and called the elders of the people," verse 7, "and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him." What that passage is saying is Israel was going to be his, his own possession.

They were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, set apart and the law which you know is given, the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20, the law in Exodus 19 through 24 directed their morality; the tabernacle in Exodus 25 to 40 would direct their worship. God himself would dwell among them. Look at Exodus 29:43-46, "I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God." God is going to dwell amongst these people.

Now watch this, watch what happens here. God is going to dwell amongst these people. They are going to have their own laws, their own land. They're going to have their own worship with their own priesthood, their own, even down to dietary distinctions, and here's what you want to see: all of this has come together right now. All of this, the way that they were delivered physically and what God gave to them afterwards in the legislation and in the tabernacle, meant that they were going to have a distinct national life. There would be a distinction about this nation that made them different from all of the other surrounding nations and that distinct national identity, watch this, would manifest God's glory to the nations. It would manifest his presence. It would manifest his character. It would manifest his demands. They would be a manifestation of his mercy. A manifestation of his power having been delivered from Egypt. Their distinction would display God to a watching world. They would minister to nations like a priest mediates between man and God, a real priest, not a Catholic imposter, just to be clear. J. Barton Payne, an outstanding scholar who died young, said this, he said, "All of this points to God's ultimate purpose of using this nation to mediate the promise of salvation abroad." Israel was set aside so that they might become the nation through whom God would keep his promise to Abraham saying, "In you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed." That was the idea and we know that they squandered a lot of opportunity, but as we've said many times, the revelation of God came through that nation; the Messiah came through that nation. But just in terms of the Pentateuch which is what we're surveying here, remembering Genesis, remembering Abraham, the Exodus, the physical exodus from Egypt then, we're summing it all up here, was the means by which God kept his promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed in him.

How great are the purposes of God in history? How great is his power? How great is his faithfulness? How magnificent is he? How infinitely majestic is the God of the Bible that he could conceive of such a plan before time began? That he would graciously call one man out of paganism and say, "I'm going to bless you like this"? And centuries go by and he silently, quietly, generation after generation, geometrically increasing the size of his people so that they are able to truly be a populated nation, then he delivers them like we've seen tonight and establishes them, not just because he can like you and I set off a big fireworks just because we can and it explodes and goes away, but because he's got this magnificent plan, this magnificent purpose, and he directs history to accomplish what he desires. Well might Abraham take off his sandals in the presence of that God and say, "This is holy ground."

The Exodus was the means by which God kept his promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed in him. Look at Exodus 33:1, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, 'Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "To your descendants I will give it."' Essentially from beginning to end in the book of Exodus, you see God saying, "I promised, I'm going to keep it." At the end you say, "I promised. I kept it."

Now, let's wrap this up. Let's make this personal as we close. I want you to think about it this way, I want you to go out this way, I really want you, I want to say I compel you but I don't preach that way, that's just too much. But I want you to go out greatly encouraged, those of you that know Christ because when we see the Exodus, we see a parallel in our own salvation. We were not in physical slavery to a nation, we were in something worse. We were in bondage to the world, to Satan, and to our own sin, and what God did for us is, there is just such a complete parallel to what he did to Egypt. He called us out of that. He delivered us from that through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he set us apart so that we would serve him according to his word, just like he did to Israel. He delivered them so that they would serve him according to his word. They were in an impossible situation of slavery. Brothers and sisters in Christ, so were you. You were in an impossible position of slavery to sin and I know enough about your backgrounds that I know the details. This played out in real life, didn't it? You were enslaved and God called you out and delivered you. Colossians 1:13 says he didn't take you from one land to another, he took you from one kingdom to another and says he delivered us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son. You were delivered so that you could serve him according to his word. And here's what I want you to see, this is what I want you to go out with tonight is what I'm about to say: this is significant. You were expecting a much bigger, bolder word, weren't you? This is significant. What we've seen tonight and what we've just rehearsed in our own conversion, this is how God operates. We see it with Israel, we see it in our own conversion. Mark it, mark it, God powerfully delivers men from slavery so that they will be his people. Physical, spiritual, he's equally sovereign over both.

What can we say to such magnificent, transcendent truth? Let's let Moses have the last word. Exodus 15:11 and a couple that follow. What do we say in response to a God who

powerfully delivers people from slavery so that they can be his people to serve him according to his word? Exodus 15:11, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders? You stretched out Your right hand, The earth swallowed them. In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation." Verse 18, "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."

Let's pray.

*Yes, O God, yes, O God, there is no one like you among the gods. No one like you majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders. Lord, we affirm with your holy, inerrant word, with full undiminished confidence we say that you, the Lord, Yahweh, the covenant keeping God, the God of our fathers and the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will reign forever and ever. Amen.*

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