

Bible Study #1 — Intro to Exodus

Welcome to the study of Exodus.

For at least 1,000 years, both Jewish and Christian tradition held that a single author wrote the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—which together are known as the Torah (Hebrew for “instruction”) and the Pentateuch (Greek for “five scrolls”).

Those five books have always had a special place in the history of God’s people and I believe they help us to understand the rest of the Bible in many ways. The Samaritans only accepted these books as their scriptures.

We know Moses was not alive during the creation so he wasn’t an eyewitness of that great event. In fact he wasn’t alive during any of the events recorded in Genesis. He would have been dependent on oral tradition or on other ancient writings, but we don’t have them to examine. It is not uncommon for people in a latter generation to write about happenings which they did not experience.

It is generally conceded that Moses did not write chapter 34 of Deuteronomy, the story of his death. We assume it was one of the faithful secretaries or persons who helped him with writing the other books. However, that also is not a reason to reject the authorship of Moses as some do.

There is debate over the dates of the Exodus. The later date and one used most often by conservative Bible Scholars is c. 1525 BC to 1400 BC. (c. in front of a date stands for the Latin word circa, which means about. Without daily newspapers, etc. dates are more difficult to be exact about. You will find this note in dates most often in times before 1000 BC.

Some of the most exciting Bible Stories are found in Exodus: Moses at the Burning Bush, The Ten Plagues of Egypt, The Parting of the Red (or Reed) Sea, Israel Camped at Mt. Sinai and the Ten Commandments, The Building of the Tent Temple (i.e. The Tabernacle), The Building of the Golden Calf and assorted instructions about how they were to live as the people of God.

Exodus is a true masterpiece. It provides the historical account of God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt’s cruel slavery. You may not think about Egypt that much in your everyday life but in the period of Exodus it was a serious superpower. People feared Egypt. Egypt had mighty Pharaohs, they built great projects such as the pyramids, and they were in touch with dark power.

According to the book of Genesis, Egypt was settled by the descendants of Ham (Genesis 10:6; Mizraim is an ancient name for Egypt). Abraham spent some time in Egypt (Genesis 12:10–20). So did Jacob (Genesis 46:1–47:12). Joseph was ruler of Egypt (Genesis 41:41–47). The Hebrew nation, in its childhood, was 400 years in Egypt. Moses was the adopted son of a queen of Egypt (Exodus 2:1–10), and, in his preparation to be Israel’s Lawgiver, he was instructed in all the wisdom and learning of Egypt. Jeremiah died in Egypt. From the Captivity until the time of Christ there was a considerable Jewish population in Egypt. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) was made in Egypt. Jesus spent part of His childhood in Egypt. Egypt became an important early center of Christianity.

While scholars debate different aspects of the historical situation, there is evidence (in addition to the Bible) that Egypt was enslaving a Semitic people in the decades leading up to the exodus, as noted in Papyrus 348, which dates back to Ramses II.

This document speaks of using the “Apiru (hapiru) to drag stones to the great pylon.” Some think there may be a connection between the word “Apiru” and Ibri, the word from which we get the word Hebrew (Ryken, Exodus, 21).

I'm planning to tell you what we will study in the next lesson so you can read it over maybe twice before you read my comments and the ideas I have collected. Tomorrow we will study Ex. 1:1–22.