

Old Testament Survey—Exodus

Discuss: What is the book of Exodus all about?

The Bible was not written in a vacuum. The human authors lived in a cultural setting, and God used that to communicate His truth. For instance, Paul used the metaphor of slavery to teach about the Christian life. Why? Because 2/3 of the world in the Roman Empire were slaves! They understood the analogy. So too we find references to armor (Eph 6), and farmers sowing seed (Mt 13), and athletes in the Greek games (1 Cor 9).

The same is true in the Old Testament. We will not understand the book of Exodus specifically, and God's use of covenants generally, if we fail to realize that covenants were very common in the Near East. For instance, archaeologists have discovered treaties used by the Hittites in the 14th-13th centuries B.C. which have many things in common with the form of the covenants in the Old Testament.

Discuss: What are the covenants mentioned in the Old Testament?

Noahic Covenant (Gen 9:9-10)

Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15)

Sinaitic Covenant (Exodus)

Palestinian Covenant (Deut)

Davidic Covenant

New Covenant (Jer 31)

Types of Near Eastern Treaties:

1. Suzerainty treaty--a superior (such as a king) would bind an inferior (such as a people he conquered in war) to obligations defined by the superior alone
2. Parity treaty--both parties were bound by oath; neither was superior or inferior (e.g. The agreement between Jacob and Laban in Gen 31)
3. Patron treaty--the superior bound himself to some obligations for the benefit of an inferior (e.g. the covenants with Noah and Abraham, where God binds Himself to certain obligations for man's benefit)
4. Promissory oath--not intended to establish a new relationship between two parties, but simply guaranteed future performance of stipulated obligations

Key: The covenant God made at Sinai with Israel is a combination between the suzerainty and promissory covenants. Why? Because the superior (Yahweh) established certain obligations for the inferior (Israel). This

covenant grew out of a previous relationship established by God with Abraham.

Features in a typical Suzerainty Covenant:

1. Preamble--the king introduces himself to his subjects
2. Historical Prologue--the king reviews the historical account of his relationship with his subjects
3. Stipulations--the king writes down the obligations he expects of his subjects
4. Blessings & Curses--the king writes down what will happen if the subjects obey or disobey
5. List of Witnesses--the king mentions his "gods" and the "gods" of his subjects
6. Deposit and Reading --the king designates a time and place for the copy of the treaty so it will be read

Note: The subjects didn't vote on whether to accept the covenant! Its authority rested in the king who gave it.

Parallels between a typical Suzerainty Covenant and the Sinai Covenant in Exodus 20:

1. Preamble--"I am Yahweh, your God" (1)
2. Historical Prologue--"Who brought you out of the land of Egypt " (1b)
3. Stipulations--Ten Commands (3-17)
4. Blessings & Curses--(Deut 28:1-14, blessings; 28:15-68, cursings)
5. List of Witnesses--None
6. Deposit and Reading --Tablets to be put in the ark (Deut 10:1-5) and read (Deut 31:10)

What's the point? Please realize that the Ten Commandments were never intended to be a system of legal observances by which people could earn God's acceptance if they obeyed them. What are the 10 commandments? They are stipulations of a covenant relationship rooted and anchored in grace (LaSor, 145-6). God had already redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt , and now He binds them to Himself with His covenant. He is telling His people what He expects of them, and how they are to live as His redeemed subjects.

With that background, now we're ready to survey the book of Exodus.

Guidelines for our Survey of the Old Testament:

1. As a general rule, we will devote one week to one book.
2. Read (or scan) the book prior to our study, looking for the big picture.
2. Our aim is to discover and remember the following details about each book:

Who wrote the book?

When was the book written?

Why was the book written?

What is the outline of the book?

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

Who wrote the book? Moses (the author of the Pentateuch)

The name "Exodus" comes from the LXX and is derived from the Greek word meaning "departure." In the Hebrew Bible the book is known for its first two words, "These are the names" (often just "Names").

When was the book written? 15th century B.C.

Why was the book written?

Exodus is a Latin word derived from the Greek *Exodus*, which means "exit," "departure." In the Hebrew the book is named after the first two words, *we'elleh shemoth* ("These are the names of").^[1] Exodus was not intended to be a "stand alone" kind of book, but is part of the five-part Pentateuch, or Torah.

God was preparing His people to enter the land of the Canaanites. In the Pentateuch, He is recording for them what they will need to know in order to live for Him in the Promised Land.

Exodus, in particular, records the story of their redemption from slavery (that is, it tells how they became a nation). Exodus also is the record of the Law (that is, how God expected His people to live).

What is the outline of the book?

Discuss: What are the main events recorded in Exodus?

The book centers on two...

I. Yahweh delivered the descendants of Jacob (1-18).

A. He sees the Oppression (1).

B. He sends Moses (2-6).

C. He sends the Plagues (6-11).

D. He leads His people out of Egypt to Sinai (12-18).

II. Yahweh established a covenant relationship with the descendants of Jacob (19-40).

A. He gave the Law.

1. Moral law (20)
2. Social law (21-24)
3. Ceremonial law (25)

B. He gave instructions for the Tabernacle.

1. The Law was the verbal expression of God's holiness.
2. The Tabernacle was the visible parable of God's holiness.
3. The People were to be the walking illustrations of God's holiness.

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

Exodus is the record of how God redeemed the Israelites and entered into a covenant relationship with the nation of Israel .

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

Exodus is a key book in biblical theology. We encounter several key themes in it (see "Pentateuch Class notes", 17-18). Discuss: What are some of these themes?

1. The God of the Bible is a God who redeems His people.

He takes the initiative in calling, saving, and entering into a special, covenant relationship with His people. It was true with the nation of Israel . It is true in the Church. It is true likewise for individual Christians.

The rest of the Bible constantly looks back to this great deliverance in Exodus. Ps 78 does. The prophets do again and again (Isa 43:16; Jer 16:14; Ezek 20:6; etc). Israel 's redemption from Egypt becomes a type of an even greater redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ.

Key NT "redemption" texts: Gal 3:13; Eph 1:7; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:12

2. The God of the Bible is a God who controls history.

Discuss: What evidences of this do we see in Exodus?

- "Another king that knew not Joseph" (1:8)
- "hardened Pharaoh's heart" (10:27)
- "The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed towards..." (11:3)

3. *The God of the Bible is a God who reveals Himself.*

- a. He reveals Himself through words.
- b. He reveals Himself through deeds.

Discuss: What other Biblical texts build on this truth? Rom 1; 2 Tim 3:16;

Heb 1:2-3

4. *The God of the Bible is a God who is holy.*

- a. He is unique.
- b. He expects His people to be distinct in character and lifestyle.

See: 1 Pt 1:16

Discuss: What happens if we neglect God's holiness? What are some evidences that would indicate we are beginning to neglect His holiness?

5. *The God of the Bible is a God who acts in justice.*

- a. He is angry towards anything unholy.
- b. He takes action to deal with sin, both towards His enemies and His own people.

Discuss: What are some examples of this in Exodus?

[\[1\]](#) From *NIV Study Bible*, p. 83.