

Exodus Chapters 1 -- John Karmelich

1. Chapters 1 & 2 of Exodus are an introduction.
 - a) The heart of the story, the exit out of Egypt, begins with the events in Chapter 3.
 - b) Chapters 1 & 2 are the connections between the stories in Genesis and God's redemption plan for the Israelites out of Egypt.
2. Imagining trying to summarize 400 years of history in one chapter!
 - a) What events would you include? What would you exclude?
 - i) That's what Chapter 1 is all about.
 - ii) A summary of the history of Israel
 - a) From the original settlers (One family)
 - b) To a large nation of over 2 million.
3. The next question is why is this important to our lives?
 - a) If we just see Exodus as a history book, we miss the application for our lives.
 - b) Remember Paul's words. " All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV)
4. Exodus Chapter 1, Verse 1: **1:1** These are the names of the sons of Israel who entered Egypt- each man with his household entered with Jacob: **1:2** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, **1:3** Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, **1:4** Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. **1:5** All the people who were directly descended from Jacob numbered seventy (Joseph was already in Egypt).
 - a) This seems like a strange way to open a book.
 - i) Usually, if you are going to list characters in the first sentence, they are key characters of a story.
 - ii) Yet, they are never mentioned again!
 - iii) Their death is recorded two verses later!
 - b) If you haven't read Genesis, it doesn't make a lot of sense.
 - i) These are the names are the 12 sons of Jacob, including Joseph.
 - ii) To those of you unfamiliar with the story of Jacob and his 12 sons from Genesis, here are the "main highlights" for our purposes:
 - a) Jacob had 12 sons; Joseph is the 2nd youngest.
 - b) Joseph prophesizes that the whole family will bow down to him.
 - c) His brothers, in their jealousy, sell him as a slave and tell their father that he is dead.
 - d) Joseph eventually becomes 2nd in command in Egypt.
 - e) The home land of Jacob & sons is suffering from a famine.
 - f) After a tearful reunion with the brothers, Joseph invites brothers/dad to come live with him in Egypt.
 - g) This all takes place in the latter part of Genesis.
 - c) A big part of the theme of Exodus is that God keeps His promises. One of the key verses near the end of Genesis is as follows:
 - i) (God speaking to Jacob): "I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there." (Genesis 46:3 NIV)
 - ii) The scary part of this is an earlier prophecy God made to Abraham...
 - a) Then the LORD said to him(Abraham), "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated *four hundred years*. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. (Gen 15:13& 14 NIV)
 - b) Those 2 verses are a great summary of the first one third of Exodus!

- iii) Therefore Jacob & sons knew the purpose of them moving to Egypt.
- iv) But the next verse of Genesis (46:4) is also important:
 - a) "I (God) will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."
- v) Therefore, Jacob and his sons knew and trusted in God that:
 - a) 1 They will become a great nation in Egypt.
 - b) 2. Their descendants are going to suffer in Egypt.
 - c) 3. God will eventually bring them back "home" again.
- vi) This is a wonderful model for us as Christians.
 - a) God called the Israelites to become a "great nation"
 - (1) God says the church is "one body" in Christ (Romans 12:4-5)
 - (2) God promised that their will be "trials and tribulation"
 - (a) Remember Jesus' warning to his disciples "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also." (John 15:20 NIV)
 - (3) God said He would surely bring you back again.
 - (a) Jesus said "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." "(John 14:3 NIV)
- vii) As you study Exodus, one will quickly learn that Egypt is a type of the "World". This will become more obvious as we study further.
 - (1) You are going to here the word "type" a lot in studying Exodus.
 - (2) A lot of the lessons will show how Moses is a "type" of Christ, or how Israelites are a "type" of believers in Christ.
 - (3) The Bible is not just a history book, but a set of lessons for our lives as Christians. It also foreshadowed the arrival of Jesus.
 - (a) Remember that Jesus said
 - (b) "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. (John 5:46 NIV)
 - (4) Paul also said "These (specific Old Testament examples) are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:17 NIV)"
- viii) So if Egypt is a "type" of the world (as in secular views on God), why did God command them to go into Egypt?
 - a) As Christians, God commands us to be "in" the world, but not "of" the world (See John 17:14-15)
 - b) The same goes for the Israelites.
 - (1) They trusted that God would bring them out one day.
 - c) Jesus makes that same promise to us!
 - d) "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:3 NIV)
 - (1) The promise to the Israelites is to be "in" the world until God calls us out. To be a witness to the world.
 - (2) That's our duty as Christians too!

5. **1:5** All the people who were directly descended from Jacob numbered seventy (Joseph was already in Egypt).
- a) Sooner or later, you are going to run into Bible skeptics who compare this verse with The New Testament Book of Acts 7:14.
 - i) In that verse Stephen is recalling this same event.
 - ii) Stephen says: “After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all.” (Acts 7:14 NIV)
 - b) So how come Exodus says 70 people and Stephen (in Acts) says 75?
 - i) The most likely answer is the account in Exodus does not mention Joseph’s offspring *who where there in Egypt* when his brother’s arrived.
 - a) The offspring are mentioned in 1 Chronicles, Chapter 7, as the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were Joseph’s two sons.
 - ii) Read this verse in Exodus carefully. There is no mention of Joseph’s children.
 - iii) Read Acts 7:14 carefully. This includes Joseph’s offspring.
6. Verse 6: In time Joseph and his brothers and all that generation died. **1:7** But the Israelites were fruitful, increased abundantly, multiplied, and became exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.
- a) Here is God keeping his promise. The land is now “filled” with Israelites.
 - i) Most scholars estimate the number of people at the time of the Exodus at around 2 million.
 - ii) From this time until the exodus is 400 years. If the population doubled every 25 years, one would have 3.3 million people.
7. Verse 8: Then a new king, who did not know Joseph, came to power over Egypt.
- a) Here comes the plot twist.
 - b) I was thinking about this whole mess from the point of view of the Israelites.
 - i) They were probably living their lives in Egypt, pretty much minding their own business, waiting for God to redeem them.
 - ii) They probably never expected hardship.
 - iii) God didn’t say anything about hardship & trials in the promise to Jacob.
 - a) Yet here comes the slavery.
 - iv) God does the same thing to us.
 - v) God never promises us that the life as a Christian is all “good times’.
 - a) Paul says “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” (2 Timothy 3:12 NIV)
 - b) “Gee, thanks Paul”.
 - c) Why does God do this?
 - (1) First of all, so that people don’t become Christians for the wrong reasons. If I were guaranteed riches and blessings for becoming a Christian, a lot of people would come for the blessings, not because they truly love God.
 - (2) Second, God does this to test us.
 - (a) The trials of our lives make us
 - (i) trust and depend upon Him more,
 - (ii) give God a chance to show *us* His Glory when all human efforts fail, and
 - (iii) to show us how desperately we *need* Him.

8. **Verse 9:** He (Pharaoh) said to his people, "Because the Israelites are more numerous and strong than we are, **1:10** come, let's deal shrewdly with them. Otherwise they will continue to multiply, and if a war breaks out, they will ally themselves with our enemies and fight against us and escape out of the land."
- a) One can see the growth of bigotry that is so common in history.
 - b) First, we read in Verse 8 of a new Pharaoh who did not "know" the Israelites.
 - i) If you know the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis
 - a) Joseph rose to power and became 2nd in command to Pharaoh.
 - b) Pharaoh became very rich & powerful under Joseph's guidance.
 - c) Pharaoh was indebted to Joseph, and allowed Joseph's brothers, fathers and extended family to settle in "the best of Egypt."
 - d) Now here comes another Pharaoh who says in effect "Joseph, never heard of him. Ancient history. What did he ever do for me?"
 - (1) In Stephen's account of this story in Acts, the original language makes it clear that when "another" Pharaoh rose to power, it was another of a different kind, probably being a different family or lineage.
 - c) Next came the growth of the Israelites in Verse 9.
 - i) You can sense the jealousy among the Egyptians.
 - a) God was blessing them by growth.
 - ii) When people see how God is blessing you, they can react two ways.
 - a) They can try to be like you, as you witness to them,
 - (1) (This is how God draws people into His kingdom)
 - b) Or jealously can begin to creep in!
 - d) Then comes Verse 10, "lets deal shrewdly with them, unless they grow against us"
 - i) The jealousy of verse 9 becomes the paranoia and panic of Verse 10.
 - ii) Unfortunately this type of racial bigotry has been common throughout history.
 - iii) Jesus himself commented well on this situation:
 - a) If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. (John 15:19 NIV)
 - b) When you act differently, people will often resent you.
 - c) Mainly, it makes them feel guilty when they see you worshipping God.
 - d) It makes them see the faults in their own life, which they would rather not look at.
 - e) To quote Jesus again, "but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19b).
9. Verse 11: So they (Egyptians) installed captains of work forces over them to oppress them with hard labor. As a result they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. **1:12** But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread. As a result the Egyptians loathed the Israelites, **1:13** and they made the Israelites serve rigorously. **1:14** So they made their lives bitter by hard service in mortar and bricks and by all kinds of service in the fields. Every kind of service the Israelites were required to give was rigorous.
- a) The jealousy of verse 9 becomes the paranoia and panic of Verse 10 becomes the oppression of Verses 11-14.
 - b) But something else was happening here too.
 - i) As the Egyptians were enslaving the Israelites, they were becoming stronger.
 - a) The hard labor was making the Israelites physically stronger and the Egyptians weaker. The Egyptians were soon to be *dependant* upon the Israelites.

- ii) Persecution also leads to growth.
 - a) The harder Egypt tried to persecute the Egyptians, the stronger and more unified they became.
 - b) If you study the history of the Christian church, their periods of greatest growth came during times of persecution.
 - (1) The first 3 centuries of the church's existence was during persecution by Romans. The church grew & flourished.
 - (2) The church is flourishing today in communist countries.
 - (a) Leaders of these churches often serve jail times (or worse) simply for preaching the gospel.
 - c) Let's get back to the Israelites.
 - i) How do you cope with this type of persecution?
 - a) How do you make it from one day to another?
 - b) Why don't we read of them planning some great escape?
 - c) Because they were waiting and hoping on God's promise.
 - d) The evidence was there that God had made them a great nation!
 - e) They trusted that this pain was only temporary.
 - (1) Just as we must trust that the pain is temporary!
 - f) God has a purpose for allowing this to happen.
 - g) A lot of you can see where I'm going with this...
 - (1) During those times of persecution, God is working on us too.
 - (2) Those difficult times is what makes us *stronger*
 - (3) Just as it made the Israelites stronger.
 - (4) The persecution also got them in good physical shape,
 - (a) It helped them endure the years in the desert.
10. Next Verse, Verse 15. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah, and the other Puah, **1:16** "When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe at the delivery: if it is a boy, kill him, but if it is a girl, then she may live." **1:17** But the midwives feared God, and they did not do what the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.
- a) First of all, two women were not responsible for being labor and delivery nurses for a two million plus population.
 - i) Egyptians were a highly organized society.
 - ii) I'm sure these two women were the appointed leaders.
 - b) The most important lesson to get out of this text is the concept of higher authority.
 - i) This is one of the few occasions where God asked us to disobey ruling authorities.
 - a) Paul teaches us in Romans " Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." (Romans 13:1 NIV, emphasis added.)
 - b) So how do you reconcile obeying local authorities when they ask you to do something wicked like killing children?
 - c) Remember the words of Peter and John: "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. (Acts 4:19b NIV)
 - d) There are situations that do call for disobedience to local government.
 - e) One has to pray and consider when such times are right.
 - f) Usually, the situation has to be very obvious, like in this one.

11. Next set of verses: **1:18** Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the boys live?" **1:19** And the midwives replied to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women-for the Hebrew women are vigorous; they give birth before the midwives come to them!" **1:20** So God treated the midwives well, and the people multiplied and became exceedingly strong. **1:21** And because the midwives feared God, he made households for them.
- a) Notice, first of all, verse 21, God rewarded the midwives with families of their own.
 - b) Think about that for a moment.
 - c) These women, who were professional midwives, *leaders* in fact, had no children of their own. They were helping moms to deliver children when they never had any of their own.
 - i) Can you imagine how *bad* they wanted children of their own?
 - ii) Just to be *around* babies, they took up the occupation of midwives.
 - d) The midwives are *great* example of faith.
 - i) This is why (in my humble opinion ☺) the names of these two midwives are recorded throughout history.
 - ii) They walked right up to the most powerful man on earth at that time, and lied to his face!
 - a) They were very aware that Pharaoh could have had him killed
 - (1) Or at least, thrown them in jail, or some lowly job
 - b) Imagine the relief of these women when Pharaoh (probably & simply) fired them from being head-midwives.
 - (1) "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him." (Proverbs 16:7 NIV)
 - c) God gave them families of their own, the one thing they probably really wanted! God does reward the faithful
 - (1) The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous... in keeping them there is great reward (Psalms 19:9a & 11b NIV)
12. When Pharaoh failed with the mid-wives, he turned to his soldiers... **1:22** Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "All sons that are born you must throw into the river, but all daughters you may let live."
- a) I spent a lot of time thinking about this verse.
 - b) Why did Pharaoh give the command to kill just the male babies,
 - a) why not the women babies?
 - ii) Is it somehow, "less evil" to kill only the male babies?
 - iii) (Would you believe I actually lost sleep worrying about this verse? ☺)
 - iv) If you want to stop a group of people from growing in number, you want to kill the female babies.
 - a) You can always increase a population with a lot more women than men.
 - b) Men can have numerous wives and often did in Biblical times.
 - v) I did a lot of reading, and talked to a lot of different sources, but no answer really satisfied me. Let me give you two possible explanations
 - a) Pharaoh was focusing this edict on the *strength* of the Israelites
 - (1) In Pharaoh's twisted mind, he probably thought he was being merciful by only killing the male babies.
 - (2) By reducing the male population, one is reducing the strength of the population. If the Israelites rebelled, which was his fear, it is difficult to do without a lot of men.
 - (3) Pharaoh might have heard "rumors" of the 400 year prophecy. Maybe he thought he could thwart it by killing the males.

- b) The second reason is simply that the plans of Satan was behind this.
 - (1) For those of you unfamiliar with *pure* evil in its Satanic form, this is no laughing matter. As Christians, Paul takes us to take warfare with the devil *very* seriously.
 - (a) “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)
 - (b) If you don’t think Satan is real, try opposing him for awhile. You will be *amazed* at the attacks that come upon you, your family and your life. Ask any pastor or missionary who preaches the gospel!
- c) The primary mission of Satan is to thwart God’s game plan.
 - (a) God has a very specific game plan for all of mankind as well as for us individually.
 - (b) Part of the joy of learning the Bible is to see God’s plan revealed and unfold.
- d) A big part of that plan was that the “seed of the Messiah” was to come through the Israelites.
 - (1) If Satan could successfully wipe out “the seed”, he has thwarted God’s plan. In the Garden of Eden, God declared war on Satan saying “I will put enmity (distance) between your seed and her seed”. (Gen. 3:15) This is the first hint of a promised Messiah through Adam & Eve. As God made it more clear where the Messiah would come (through Israel), Satan focused his attack. If Satan could kill a whole generation of male children, he wins.
- e) By the way, many Christians, including myself believe Satan is still persecutes the Israelites *today*, even in the Post-Jesus world. This is a lecture all into itself. But to summarize, the “believing remnant of the Israelites ” must petition the Messiah (Jesus) to come. If Satan can wipe out the believing remnant, he has thwarted God’s plan.
- c) Back to the verse. I also thought about this verse from the perspective of the Israelite families who lost their children.
 - i) There is nothing, repeat nothing more painful to a parent than the loss of their children.
 - a) I can’t imagine the grief that the parents went through who lost their sons to the Egyptian solders.
 - b) If I was an Israelite parent-to-be after this decree, I’m sure I would be looking for away to escape out of Egypt. “Forgot God, let’s make a run for it”. Who wouldn’t? This is your child’s life at stake!
 - (1) I can picture many Israelites suffering in pain and dying trying to escape from this situation!
 - c) I am sure there were a lot of parents crying to God,
 - (a) Asking where is the promise of your redemption?
 - (b) Asking why are you allowing this to happen?
 - (2) The parents didn’t have the advantage of reading the rest of Exodus. They didn’t know what was about to happen. All they could see was the horrible pain of their present situation.
 - d) We have to remember their cries in our pain.
 - (1) God has a purpose for allowing all of this to happen.
 - (2) God will not work in our time, but in His time!

- (a) Just because we cry out to God, we can't expect God to act immediately!
 - (b) We must relinquish the situation to God.
 - (c) God will take his revenge, as we will soon see.
 - (d) But we need to work it out in His timing.
13. Last thing to bring out is the "timing" at the end of Chapter 1.
- a) God made a promise to the Israelite people that He would make them a great nation, and bring them out of the land of Egypt.
 - i) The former was done, and the Israelites at the end of chapter 1, were still waiting for the later.
 - ii) They knew the time was near, as they had become a "great nation", and the 400 years were nearly up (the 400 years was predicted to Abraham in Gen. 15:13).
 - iii) Satan also knew the time was near, and the attacks and persecutions upon the Israelites had increased (hard labor, killing the babies, etc.)
 - b) Think about the parallel in the life of the church.
 - i) God made promises to the church that Jesus would return to the earth for his church.
 - ii) "Men of Galilee," they (angels) said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11 NIV)
 - iii) Like the Egyptians, we don't know the day, or hour, but God expects us to hold on to that promise. As we have mentioned, God puts us through trials.
 - a) Our responsibility is to focus on Him and not our trials!
 - (1) Jesus says: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." (John 16:22 NIV)
 - iv) Jesus also says "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:42 NIV)
 - a) This is a command to us... To keep watch.
14. Let's Pray
- a) O father, maker of heaven and earth, one who knows all, and has a wonderful plan for our lives, help us to trust you, especially through our trials. Help us to focus on your promises to us and not the pain of the present situation. If we let *you* fight our battles, and follow *your* commands, our rewards will be far greater than when we try to fight them ourselves. Help the lessons of the Israelites sink into our hearts and apply them to our lives, we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.