

## **An Aerial View of the Old Testament, (Part 1)**

### **Selected Scriptures**

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I understand that my announcement this morning that we were going to study the Old Testament in six weeks or less caused quite a stir. In fact, I heard there were some friendly wagers going on about whether or not that could actually be done, and that some of you are here not to learn about the Old Testament, but simply to see if someone as long-winded as I am can actually do it.

Whatever your reason for being here tonight, I'm glad you're here, and I trust that by the time we're done with this series, it'll be a great encouragement to you.

We often neglect those things that are the most clearly and visibly in sight, in spite of their great value. When I think of the Old Testament and how it's often neglected, my mind goes back to a quote from Martin Luther, the reformer. He writes that,

“when I was 20 years old, I had not seen a Bible. I thought that there were no gospels and epistles except those which were written in the Sunday Postils (a publication of the Catholic Church). Finally, I found a Bible in the library, that's in the monastery, and immediately I took it with me into the monastery. I began to read, to reread, and to read it over again.”

Imagine if you will, here's a man who's grown up in the Catholic Church, he's now 20 years old, and he's never seen a Bible. Not only has he grown up in the Catholic Church, but he's a monk and has been for a couple of years and never seen the Word of God.

The book was hidden in plain sight in the monastery library. We shake our heads at that, and rightfully we should. But sadly, for many Christians, the Old Testament has been equally neglected even though it's there right in the front of our Bibles. If you ask some Christians how to find specific books of the Old Testament, they'll struggle to get there. I hope by the time we're done with this series that will no longer be true for you.

Often, I think it's neglected because as New Testament Christians, believers just don't understand it. They just don't see the connection between those Old Testament symbols and pictures and the faith of Jesus Christ. Yet, the Old Testament is equally important in the mind of God as the New. Second Timothy 3:16 and 17 resonate in our ears. All Scripture is inspired by God, is breathed out by God, and is profitable. Remember that when Paul wrote that he was referring primarily to the Old Testament, and those books that had been written by that time, and of course, anticipating what God would do in the future.

The Old Testament plays a vital role. One scholar has determined that when you look at the Old Testament and its uses in the New, there are some 250 direct quotations. There are 1,603 indirect references or allusions to the Old Testament and its history. The New Testament refers to Isaiah some 308 times, to Psalms 303 times, and there are only three New Testament books without or four rather, without direct reference to the Old Testament - John's three epistles and Paul's letter to Philemon.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to survey the contents of the Old Testament. If you've ever been to Barnes & Noble (I love books, so I often find myself there), you'll find an entire series of books that are aerial views of various famous places and cities. They're intended to give you a kind of birds-eye view of those places, those destinations. You don't see all the detail; instead, you get the big picture of what that particular site is like. That's what I plan for us to do together in these weeks. We're going to take an aerial tour of the Old Testament. We're going to fly over the peaks and the valleys. We won't be able to make out all of the details, but by the time we're done, I hope that we'll have our arms around both the history and the message of the Old Testament.

Now for the sake of our study, I have broken our survey of the Old Testament into three parts. First part is the history of God's people. The second is the unfolding of God's redemptive plan in the Old Testament, and the third is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Of course, the second and third are closely related.

But I want us to see first of all the flow of the history, I want you to understand how the Old Testament is structured and how it relates to itself. And then we'll look at its message in the following weeks. But tonight, I want us to begin to look at the history of God's people at a kind of overview of (the,) a portion of the Old Testament we'll begin tonight.

Now when you look at our English Bible, our English Old Testament versus the Hebrew Bible, understand that there is essentially the same content. The English Old Testament has 39 books in your Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible has 22 books, but it's the same content. Why is there such a difference in the number of books? Well, there are two primary reasons. One is because the Minor Prophets, you know those smaller prophets, are grouped together as one book in the Hebrew Bible and called The Twelve. In addition, six groups of books are counted as one book where we divide them. And I've listed them here. The books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles we divide into parts one and two. In Hebrew they don't divide them; you only have three books in Hebrew; the book of Samuel, the book of Kings, and the book of Chronicles. Ezra and Nehemiah are one book in the Hebrew text, Joshua and Ruth are also one book in the Hebrew text, and Jeremiah and Lamentations are one book in the Hebrew text.

By the way, I'm going to run through a lot of material. There is no way you will write everything that I will put on the screen tonight. I will copy these and make them available next week. You can write down what you want, but don't feel compelled to get everything I say or everything that's on the screen.

Now I ... this would be a great example. I simply want you see the different breakdown, that's why I've included this. You can see the Hebrew arrangement on the left and the English arrangement on the right. You recognize the English arrangement.

We have the five books of the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

Then you have books of history: running from Joshua through Esther.

You have poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes rather.

And then you go to the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel. (By the way, they're major because of the length of the scrolls on which they were written, the length of the books, not because they're more important than the Minor Prophets, why they were grouped together as The Twelve.)

So, the Minor Prophets then follow.

In the Hebrew arrangement, you can see you have the Torah, and that's where we begin, but then you have the prophets, the former prophets as they're described, and the latter prophets. And following that are the writings broken down poetically, the Megillot as it's called, and then the historical books finishing out the Old Testament of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and both books of Chronicles. So that's how they differ in terms of the order and structure in which they occur.

When you come to the New Testament, understand that Jesus refers to the Old Testament in two basic divisions. In the days of Christ, you had the Law, that's the first five books you see there on the left-hand side, the Torah. And then you had the prophets, that's everything else. In the times of Christ, that's how it would have been considered. All right, so that gives you kind of the difference between the English and the Hebrew.

With that in mind, let me give you a sweeping overview of Old Testament history, an overview, a timeline if you will, of how the Old Testament shakes out. Now, you'll see that on the left-hand side is a basic timeline. In the middle is a tag for that period of time (a label if you will for that period of time), and on the right hand side you find the biblical books which describe that period of time. So, let me just briefly run down through these. If you don't get them tonight, don't worry. We're going to come back and look at these in detail. I just want to start with sort of a sweeping overview.

You'll see that initially you have from 4000 (and we'll talk about that date in a moment, but that's the most conservative date for the creation), 4000 to 2100 is the period that's called universal dealings. God is dealing with the entire human race, that's from Genesis 1 to 11.

Then you begin the patriarchal period, roughly with Abraham's time, 2100, to the death of Joseph in 1804, and that's covered in Genesis 12 - 50.

That's followed of course by the period of the bondage in Egypt, 400 years of slavery. That's all described (that 400 years), in one chapter and a few verses really in that chapter, and that's Exodus 1, followed of course in 1445, 1446 by the exodus.

That begins the exodus and that long period of time, the wilderness wanderings, 40 years in the wilderness after the time at Sinai. That is described for us in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy finishes with the children of Israel at the edge of the Promised Land, ready to go in under Joshua's leadership and take control of the land of Canaan.

That bring us then to the second part. You'll see that the second chart I have here, which picks it up from that time period, after the conquest, or after the period of time of the wilderness wanderings comes the conquest and the division of the land under Joshua. And it's described for us in the book of Joshua from 1406 - 1390.

After that period of time and Joshua's death, you remember the first generation after Joshua served the Lord as long as Joshua was alive, and that generation was alive.

The next generation did not serve God, and we enter the darkest period in Old Testament history, the period of the judges, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. There was no central government in Israel, but rather there were regional judges that delivered the people from bondage from time to time. That period of time, that dark period of time runs from 1390 B.C. to 1051, and it's covered in Judges and Ruth.

Now 1051 is a key date in Old Testament history because it's with that date that the monarchy begins, there is now a king in Israel. The monarchy's divided as you can see here into two parts, what's called the united monarchy, that's when the whole people of Israel are under one king. But there comes a time, you remember after Solomon's death when Solomon's son was unwise. He listened to the young counselors and ended up dividing the kingdom, and there were now two

separate parts of Israel under two different kings. That's called the divided monarchy. You can see the dates there. The united monarchy is very easy to remember, it's 120 years, you see that, from 1051 to 931 (Tom meant to say 931 here), 120 years, evenly divided, 40 years under Saul, 40 years under David, and 40 years under Solomon.

And then you have the divided monarchy. That period of time is described for us, the monarchy, in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

Of course, at the end of the divided monarchy, they're carried away captive. You have the exile from 605 (the initial rout of the people of Israel), to 538, and that time period you have Daniel and Ezekiel giving us insight into what's going with the people of God in Babylon.

After the Babylonian captivity, you have the return with the edict of Cyrus in 538 B.C., and that return happens in three phases. We'll talk about when we get there. And those events are covered by Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah.

Now when you look at all of that, you say well what happened to all the prophets? I'll explain that in just a moment. Those are the historical books, and that's the flow of Israel's history. Again, look at it again, you begin with universal dealings, the patriarchal period, bondage in Egypt, the exodus and the wilderness wanderings, the conquest and the division of the land, the period of the judges (that dark period), followed by the monarchy, both united originally and then divided. They go into exile, and then they return from exile into the land. That's the flow of Old Testament history.

Now if you want (and some of you will do this and others of you will not), those of you who are teachers I encourage you to consider this. If you will memorize these eight dates, you will know Old Testament history. You can figure from these eight dates everything else.

First of all, Abraham in 2166, the exodus in 1446, the monarchy begins in 1051, I said the kingdom is divided 120 years later in 931. Israel falls (that's the northern part of the kingdom) in 722 to the Assyrians. In 586, the southern kingdom, called Judah, falls to the Babylonians. And

then in 538 after a period of roughly 70 years (we'll talk about how to figure that), you have Cyrus' decree to allow the Jews to repatriate the land, and the return begins. And then in 420, the Old Testament events end. That's the Old Testament in one sweeping sort of view of what happens.

Now the writing prophets (the Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, so forth, as well as the Minor Prophets), they tend to cluster in their writing around the fall of Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Why is that? Well because you have to put yourself back in time, and we'll do this when we get there, but let me give you an overview.

If you lived in the ancient world, your army (when it was victorious) proved that your god was bigger and stronger than the god of the nation you defeated. So, everything was tied to your god. Well, if you're the only true God, and you're going to allow your people to be carried off in captivity, what do you have to do beforehand? You have to prophesy that it's going to happen. You're going to orchestrate it because of their sin so that when it happens, (the gods of, or) the people of the gods around them cannot say Yahweh is not strong, He could not protect His people.

And so, the prophets write (if you will), to defend the reputation of God. They prophesy that Israel is going to be carried off captive in order to justify that when it happens. The other nations cannot say it's because Yahweh could not defend His people. So, that's a basic overview. We'll talk about all of those things in detail.

But I want us to start tonight where we should start, with the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. And again, our goal tonight is to do a historical survey to get our arms around the history. We'll come back in subsequent weeks and look at the message and the message of redemption as it weaves its way through here. But I want you to get sort of a history lesson if you will. And this is important, and we'll talk about why it's important before the night's done.

We start with universal dealings, Genesis 1 - 11. God here deals with the human race as a whole. The period covers from the creation to the call of Abram, almost 2,000 years if we use the most conservative date for the creation of the world.

Let me explain why there are different dates for creation. There are two genealogies in Genesis, one in Genesis 5 and one in Genesis 11. Both of those genealogies purport to give us the flow of the record of the lives of the people that make up those generations. There is debate among good men. They disagree over whether those genealogies have gaps in them or not. Not that they're mistakes, they're not mistakes. If they're gaps, God intended to skip certain generations to highlight key names, but there are those who say that there are gaps, and there are those who say there are no gaps.

If you do not believe there are gaps in the genealogies in Genesis, then you have a creation date of about 4000 B.C. If you believe there are gaps in the genealogy record, then you can stretch those genealogies to about 10,000, and there are even a few people who would stretch it to 20,000 B.C. But if you believe the Bible, there is no way you can push the creation date out any further than 20,000 B.C.

We studied the creation in great detail back a number of months ago, so I'm not going to go through that and defend that again, I encourage you to listen. But if you take the most conservative date for the creation of the world at 4000 B.C., then you have 2,000 years in universal dealings, which is more than the rest of the Old Testament combined. If you take from the time of Abraham to the time of Malachi, that's only about 1,700 years. So, you have 2,000 years of history at least and maybe a lot more (if you don't believe the, or) if you believe there are gaps in the genealogy up to 20,000 B.C. You have a lot of time in eleven chapters.

Now this section of Old Testament history is marked by four great events. In chapters 1 and 2 you have the creation. In 3 - 5 you have the fall, 6 - 9, the flood. And 10 and 11, the nations, (that includes the judgment at Babel and the spreading of Noah's descendants across the face of the earth).



We've studied the creation at great length, and again I'm not going to go there, but I encourage you to listen if you weren't here for that. The fall we also studied together as we looked at the sinfulness of man as we studied the doctrine of man. The flood we have not looked at in great detail, but you understand that great cataclysmic worldwide event, followed by the spreading of Noah's sons.

When you look at how they spread across the world, this gives you a rough picture of what happened after the flood. Essentially you can see that Shem's descendants gathered in the area around the Persian Gulf in what are the modern Arab states. Ham's descendants gathered on the south side of the Mediterranean and down on both sides of the Red Sea down the Sinai Peninsula and further down into the continent of Africa. And Japheth's descendants were primarily up in the Asia Minor and the European area. That gives you sort of a wide sweep of where the three sons repopulated the earth after the flood.

Now this period of universal dealings ends with our meeting a man named Abram, who suddenly appears in the family of Terah. And with the mention of Abram, we enter the patriarchal period. It's from Genesis 12 - Genesis 50. It's known as the patriarchal age because it consists of four consecutive generations of a small clan in Israel in the Middle East.

Each generation is governed by the ruling patriarch, so this period is really (we could say) the stories of four people. If primeval history is four events - creation, fall, flood, and nations, then patriarchal history is the story of four people - Abraham in Genesis 12 - 24, Isaac in 25 and 26, Jacob in 27 - 36, and Joseph in 37 - 50. That is the line through which God chose to make Himself known.

Now, why is it that we go from God dealing with humanity in general as a unit to God dealing with one man and his clan? Well understand that in the first 11 chapters of Genesis, as God deals with man, the testimony that comes out of that dealing is that man's moral condition is clear and consistent. He is committed to rebellion. So, in Genesis 12 and following, God takes a gracious step to provide men both individually and corporately with powerful testimony to His character and purposes. God (listen carefully), God will identify and raise up one man and His family

through whom He will in a unique way put Himself on display. That's God's intention. You see that even in the original calling of Abraham in Genesis 12.

... the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And I will make your name great, And ... you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse." [And watch the end of this great call,] "And in you [Abram] all the families of the earth will be blessed." [God had a distinct saving purpose in identifying one man and his clan through which to put Himself on display.]

Abram and his descendants become God's great object lesson in the world. They become God's witness nation of His greatness and His grace. And if you think this is not important to the Lord, understand that in 1 - 11 you had 2,000 years, and in 12 - 50, 290 years. There's a lot that God wants to say about His interaction with the patriarchs. God chooses one man and one family to whom He will bear a special relationship, and that is Abraham. We know nothing by the way about Abraham's first 75 years of life. And we know very little about his second, or excuse me, his final 75 years of life. The greatest detail that we know about Abraham's life is from his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday to his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, from his conversion until Isaac, the son of the promised was born.

So, God comes to him and says I want you to go forth from your country. Where did he come from? He came from Ur of the Chaldees. You remember your world history? Ur was located in Sumer in Mesopotamia, "Mesopotamia" meaning the "land between the rivers". It was composed, Sumer was, of 12 city-states and Ur was the hub. It gave us, that great culture did, cuneiform, which was the earliest known form of writing. It was a highly cultured cosmopolitan culture. And yet God tells Abram to leave. Why leave Ur? You could make an argument that that is the birthplace of civilization, its influence is far and wide. Why would God have Abram leave Ur?

Well there are two reasons, first of all because Deuteronomy tells us it was full of false gods and their worship. God wanted to insulate and isolate Abram from his ancestors because that was his

past. He was a polytheist, he worshipped many gods, and when God calls him, He calls him out of that environment.

But why Canaan? Why go to that narrow, rather barren little strip of land in the Middle East? If this map that I have on the screen were larger, you would see more clearly why. It's because Israel is at the crossroads of three great continents. It is the land bridge between Europe, Asia and Africa. On a topographical map, you would discover that there is a great desert of barrenness to the east of Israel that really can't be crossed. And even on the path I show here of Abram's journeys, you see that he went up and came down through Israel. That's because no one wanted to travel across the barren track of the desert that was a straight line between Ur and Canaan. And so, he went up and over that area and down, and that's the way the traffic of the ancient world ran.

You see, God placed Israel at the most strategic spot on the most important international highway of the ancient world. It was the land bridge between three great continents. And yet at the same time (and this is remarkable), the tiny land of Israel is divided horizontally, or vertically rather, from west to east into five distinct geographic regions. And in the middle of those regions is an area called the hill country, and that's where most of Israel lived and where they spent most of their existence. But that was not the easiest area to travel.

And so, the remarkable thing about it is, that even though military and commercial traffic was constantly marching through her land, Israel was remarkably secluded in that central hill country where she lived most of her life. And so, think about it. God places His people in the center of the ancient world, and yet at the same time by the way He constructed the land of Israel, she found her daily life insulated from all of those influences - remarkable providence in God's plan.

So, Abraham goes to Canaan, and he waits for the promised son. Eventually, as you know, the covenant is confirmed not in Ishmael, the son born to Hagar, but rather in Isaac. Isaac really only gets 2 chapters of Genesis, and essentially the important thing to know about Isaac is that he has twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob struggles for the birthright, remember he was the second one out of

the womb that day. And he struggles to gain the birthright and eventually does, but he didn't really need to do that because he was the one God had chosen.

The wanderings of Jacob don't merit a lot of our time tonight, but he leaves because of fear. He fled from Esau, he went up to Haran, and he not only fled from Esau, but also to get a wife. You remember on the way he had a vision of the stairway to heaven, and years later he returned along that same route and was received by his brother Esau.

Later, Jacob was renamed Israel, and he had twelve sons, Jacob's dozen sons. I'm the last of ten children. I can't imagine twelve sons. Jacob's eleventh son (as you'll see on the chart that I've put on the screen here), was named Joseph. Joseph was the key. Joseph was hated by his brothers. He ends up being sold into Egypt. And later, (because of a drought), the family of Jacob and Israel goes to Egypt, and there they end up in Egypt for 430 years. You understand God's providence? This eleventh son of Jacob ends up in Egypt, and you've read the story, it's a remarkable story of God's providence from Genesis 37 to Genesis 50. It really is at its heart a lesson in providence. God sends Joseph one step forward and two steps back until Joseph ends up exactly where God wants Him, ready to protect and preserve, to insulate, to incubate the family that He has chosen through which to put Himself on display.

So, they end up (a family of seventy) headed down into Egypt because of the drought, because they couldn't get food where they were. And you'll notice that they go down into an area of the land of Egypt called Goshen. And there they settled. And Jacob's descendants end up in Egypt for 430 years, and many of those years were hard years.

Why did God do that? Why did God send his people that He chose through whom to put Himself on display into Egypt and into 400 years of bondage and slavery? There's a remarkable verse in Genesis 15. In fact, look at it with me, Genesis 15. God's talking here to Abraham. We're still a couple hundred years before the slavery begins, and God says this in this amazing ceremony that He carries out with Abram. In Genesis 15, notice verse 16. You're going to go to your fathers in peace, you'll be buried at a good old age, then in the fourth generation, they will return here "for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete", is not yet full. If you go back to verse 13, God

had said your descendants are going to be strangers in a land that's not theirs, they'll be enslaved and oppressed 400 years. Why? Why? Here's the answer, verse 16, "because the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." You know what God was saying? God was saying the people that Joshua will kill and drive out 400 years after that captivity begins will be an act of my justice. But in my patience, I'm giving those terrible, polytheistic, child sacrificing people more time. But the time will come.

Derek Kidner writes, "Until it was right to invade, God's people must wait, even if it costs them four centuries of hardship." You know there's an incredible lesson of God's providence in that, isn't there even in our lives? We don't know what God is doing. We don't know what His plans are. God had something in mind for 600 years later when He talked to Abraham. So, we don't know what God does, but we can trust Him. So, they find themselves in Egypt, and Jacob and Joseph, his eleventh son, die, but their multiplying clan remains in Egypt. They went down seventy, and they just continue to multiply, incubated there from the influences of the Canaanites, growing for God's time.

That brings us to the end of Genesis and to Exodus. Now when you come to Exodus, the book can be outlined like this. You have the exodus itself, deliverance from Egypt in 1 - 18. Chapter 12 is actually the Passover and 13 is when they leave Egypt, but that whole, the exodus is encompassed in those 18 chapters. The second portion of Exodus is the Law, the covenant at Sinai, 19 - 34, followed by the tabernacle constructed and inhabited in 35 - 40.

When you look at the book of Exodus, its central theme is God's redeeming of a people for Himself and entering into a covenant relationship with them. God would use this nation to put Himself on display, to serve as a channel of divine revelation, to give the Bible to the people of the world, and to be the people through whom the Savior would come. Understand this is what God is doing with this nation. He's putting Himself on display; He's serving as a channel of divine revelation, using them to service that, and as the people through whom the Savior would come.

The basic spiritual message of Exodus is that Yahweh is a redeeming God. This is where we first most powerfully in the Old Testament get the lesson that God takes slaves and makes them His own, and that Yahweh keeps His covenant. He made a promise. He keeps His word. He promised Abram what He would do, and He does it. Some 600 years later, He steps in to execute His word just as He promised.

Now it begins, Exodus does, with the bondage in Egypt. One chapter, a portion of that chapter, gives us a picture of what went on. Four hundred years, there's very little revealed about those years, but the conditions of this period are reflected for us in Exodus 1. Understand that from 1876 B.C. when Jacob took his family into Egypt until 1730, in other words roughly 150 years. For about 150 years, the Hebrews lived prosperous and in ease.

But in 1730 B.C., a new dynasty began in Egypt. If you have any familiarity with Egyptian history, you know it was the Hyksos dynasty. And with it came a life of unbearable affliction and suffering for the people of God under a Pharaoh whom is described as one who knew not Joseph; a new dynasty, a group of foreigners who had come into Egypt and gradually grown to an extent where they took over the leadership of Egypt. They displaced the Egyptians from the leadership of the land.

And because there were fewer of them than there were Egyptians, there was always a concern that the Egyptians would mount an overthrow by bonding together perhaps with the Israelites. And so, there was this desire to enslave the Israelites to keep them suppressed so they could never be a threat to overthrow this new dynasty, the Hyksos dynasty.

By the way, the making of bricks is much the same today as it was in the ancient world. You can see the picture there, simple wooden troughs, mud-baked bricks, and that's what they were required to do. Into that situation, God heard the cry of His people. And the deliverance comes under a man named Moses. That deliverance is described beginning in Exodus 2 and running all the way through Deuteronomy, the end of that book and Moses' death.

Let's take a moment to walk through a little Egyptian history. We're talking about the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt. You can see that there were several characters here. The one I want you to notice on the left is a woman, a woman by the name of Hatshepsut; perhaps you saw her exhibit when it was down in one of the local museums. Hatshepsut was the most powerful woman ever to live in Egypt. She adopted Moses. Her only child, a daughter, died before she was 10. She was the daughter of Thutmose the First, whom you see on this chart. She married her half-brother Thutmose the Second, and thus ascended to the throne as queen, as the queen of her half-brother Thutmose the Second. When he died, her ten-year old stepson, Thutmose the Third, temporarily took the throne, but then Hatshepsut stepped in. She proclaimed herself to be the supreme ruler of Egypt, and she sat in that role for 22 years.

Only two prior queens in Egypt's history had risen to supreme ruler. Only Hatshepsut posed and dressed like a man. She ruled with cruelty and oppression, she was a hard woman. She was succeeded by her stepson who was now in his early thirties, Thutmose the Third, who hated her and tried to obliterate her from memory. Moses was adopted by this woman, the most powerful woman in Egyptian history.

There's almost no information about his years from the age of 5 to the age of 40 years old. The most we have is in Acts 7, turn there with me. Acts 7, in Stephen's sermon, he tells us a little bit, verse 21. "After he had been set outside", speaking of his rescue, "Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son." So, we know that she cared for him as her own son, remember her own child had died young. We know that he was raised in the palace at Thebes. We're told here that he received the best of educations. He was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and that he was a man of power in both words and deeds. He was a powerful, influential man in how he spoke and in what he did.

But Moses clearly makes a choice to associate with his own people. Verse 23, "when he was approaching the age of forty, it enters his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian." Now look at verse 25 because this is key to Moses' thinking. "He supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance

through him, but they did not understand.” Moses was apparently clinging to the promise of Genesis 15 that God would bring these people out of the land of Egypt and give them the Promised Land. And he understood (I think in some sense), that he was the one God would use. But the people didn’t understand that.

Nevertheless, Hebrews 11 tells us he chose to identify himself with the enslaved Hebrews, forfeiting all the advantages that he’d spent forty years gaining. Hatshepsut undoubtedly warned him of the result of his choice, but he was not to be deterred. What did Moses really give up? Well, he definitely gave up an easy life of wealth and luxury and power and fame in any government position that he would have chosen. And very possibly, we can’t be sure of this, but very possibly he gave up the opportunity to become Pharaoh of Egypt himself. If you look at the life of his mother and her history, you realize that were some three separate opportunities when he might have been thrust to the throne.

What was the driving motive behind Moses’ decision? I love this in Hebrews 11; you know what we’re told? He considered the reproach of the Messiah greater than the treasures of Egypt. Moses made a life choice, a catastrophic choice as many of the people around him would have seen, because of his commitment to Israel’s Messiah. He knew the Messiah was coming. So, in light of what happened there, he flees Egypt and ends up spending the next forty years of his life as a shepherd in Midian. He leaves Egypt, (the point of), (the beginning of the red arrow there on the screen), and ends up in the barrenness of Midian.

And of course, you know what happens at the end of that period of time. He’s at Sinai, up there to the right-hand side. The burning bush would have probably been down here in this region. He sees this bush that burns, but that is not consumed. And God calls him to deliver the people. And I love this; when you look at God’s call of Moses, listen to Moses’ objections. He says I have no authority, who am I? I have no message, what shall I say? I have no credibility. They will not believe me. I have no eloquence, I am slow of speech, and I am slow of tongue.

But look at God’s response to each of those. I have no authority, who am I? Yahweh says I will be with you. I have no message. What shall I say? Say that I am has sent you; let my name be



your message. I have no credibility. They will not believe me. Yahweh says what is that in your hand? You'll have my power to substantiate your message. I have no eloquence, I'm slow of speech and slow of tongue, and Yahweh says you will have my provision. I will be with your mouth and Aaron shall be your spokesman; out of excuses, return to Egypt.

So, Moses returns back from Midian to Egypt. And there we begin the encounter, Yahweh the God of Israel versus the gods of Egypt. It's a remarkable story really. When they returned, when Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt, the Pharaoh they encounter (you'll see here on the chart again), is Amenhotep the Second, the last name at the bottom. Amenhotep the Second, he was the son of Thutmose the Third, Moses' nemesis. He's in the fourth year of his reign when they return, and he's about 22 years old. And here shows up Moses, 80 years old. And he says let my people go.

Now this Pharaoh reigned from Memphis, over here to the side of the land and not from Thebes. It's close as you can see to Goshen, and that helps the story unfold as the plagues are rained out on Egypt. The timeline of the plagues is about six months. When you think about the plagues, understand best we can determine they lasted for a period of about six months from late September or early October through the latter part of March. What about these plagues? What were they?

Well there are three essential views. Some see them as pure myth, which of course we reject out of hand. Others say no, they are greatly exaggerated accounts of perfectly understandable albeit unusual natural phenomenon which Moses used for an object lesson. The third view is that they were unique historical outpourings of the wrath of a sovereign God who wished to show not only Egypt but his own people that He is the Lord of heaven and earth. They were miracles, and that's absolutely what the Bible underscores as true.

Why did God send the plagues? Well there really are two purposes, to provide a knowledge of the true God. God is going to irrefutably answer Pharaoh's question. Turn back to Exodus 5:2. Here was Pharaoh's question; he would live to regret it. Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" Let me remind you that people believed (as I said before) that the domain of the gods of a country extended as far as the borders of that

country and measured their strength by its size, the victory of its armies, the decree of its prosperity determined just how powerful and strong your gods were. And so, God says I will show you that I am Yahweh. I will show it to Israel. I will show it to Pharaoh. I will show it to all Egypt, and I will show it to all the world. God put Himself on display as the powerful sovereign God of all creation, and also to destroy the credibility of Egypt's false gods.

The plagues were specifically designed to be directed at the gods of Egypt, each of the plagues designed to show Yahweh's superiority over all of Egypt's gods. God was essentially saying I am the only true God, and everything you worship as god is under my control. If we had time, I would take you through the various gods and goddesses that each of the plagues addressed. We don't have time to do that, and I'm not going to do that tonight, but I can assure you there were targets if you will for each of these plagues to let the people of Egypt know that what they thought was god was, in fact, under the control of the God of Israel. And did it work? Yes, it did. Four hundred years later, when the Philistines take the Ark of the Covenant, they're still remembering what Yahweh did in Egypt.

Here's what God said (I love this quote in Exodus 9), this is what it was all about. Exodus 9:14 - 16, God says "For this time, I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth." This next phrase sends shivers up my spine. God says, "For if by now I had put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth." God says listen, I'm here to teach you a lesson, not to obliterate you. If that's what I wanted to do, I could've done it in a moment. But indeed, for this reason, I have allowed you to remain in order to show you my power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth, God putting Himself on display.

In response to the plagues of course, the people of Israel are sent out. This is their route, they come down out of the land of Goshen down to Sinai, and when they leave the land, they are unbelievable numbers. They went down you remember as 70, a small clan of people, one family, several generations. And when they leave, they're counted, there are 603 (Tom meant to say 603,000) male Israelites over the age of 20. There is the mixed multitude, and we're not told

exactly how many of them there are. There are women, and the conservative guess based on the number of males is 600,000, plus all of those (male and female) under 20. And so, a conservative estimate would be more than two million Israelites leave the land of Egypt, plus their flocks and herds.

And they began the long journey to Canaan. This journey is recorded for us in the rest of the books of the Pentateuch. In Exodus 13 - 40, you have three months from Egypt to Sinai and nine months at Sinai, so that's one year. In Leviticus, you have a span of one month that's covered in the giving forth of the laws in Leviticus. In Numbers, you have the wilderness wanderings of 38 years and 9 months. In Deuteronomy, you have a period of about two months, as they're there on the border waiting to go in and take the land and Moses dies. Together you're looking at a period of forty years, a long journey. It shouldn't have taken that long, but it was because of their unbelief.

Mount Sinai was a desolate place, but it was the place where God had called Moses to go and rescue His people and to come back to that place. When they get to Sinai, (the first day they prepare), the first two days they prepare themselves. On the third day, we're told that the cloud descended over the mountain, that it was God's presence. There was a thunderstorm. There was lightning. There was an earthquake. The people were not allowed to ascend up to the top of the mountain. And in the middle of all of that, a trumpet began to blow. And the trumpet grew louder and louder and louder. You have the earth shaking. You have the thunder. You have the rumblings, the lightning, and the trumpet grows so loud that undoubtedly the people were covering their ears, afraid of how much louder it might get. And suddenly it stops. All of the noise ceases, and out of the middle of that, God speaks. And God speaks what are called the Ten Words. It's at the mountain Sinai that the Mosaic covenant is ratified, the Mosaic covenant.

It's contained in Exodus 19:1 - 8. Now Israel was already a covenant people. God had made the Abrahamic covenant back in chapter 12 and repeated it several times through Abram's life (Genesis 12 and following). But here God offered Israel the privilege of being a covenant nation, but to do so they must accept the privilege and the conditions which they do. God chose Israel to

be salt and light in the midst of a wicked world. Here is how it's put in Exodus 19:4 and following.

“... ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, 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; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ [a witness nation] These are the words ... [which] you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

The children of Israel accept the covenant terms and become God's people, and He becomes their King. They were to be God's great witness nation to the rest of the world.

Moses (during this period of time) spends two 40-day periods up on the mountain, and during this time on Sinai, God gave Moses plans for a tabernacle to be built. Here is a semblance of what that tabernacle may have looked like. Just to give you some idea, it was not a particularly beautiful structure, but this gives you a picture of what it would have, how it would appear. And what was the significance of the tabernacle? It was a throne room for Israel's King. God was now the King of Israel, and the tabernacle was His throne room.

Exodus 25:8, “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.” And then Yahweh takes up residence among the people, it's His tent (if you will) in the midst of the people. In Exodus 40, we read,

Then the cloud covered the tent of the meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” [King Yahweh inhabits His throne room; He is now Israel's King.]

Now during the time at Sinai, God gave two systems which are absolutely crucial to understanding the Old Testament: the sacrificial system and His law, which we will look at together next time.

What I want you to see is that God has done for us what He did for Israel. This very same wording that's used at Sinai (yeah, at Sinai), is used of the church in the New Testament. We are told that we are now a kingdom of priests. We represent God. We are a holy nation. We are now God's witness nation. Understand this is not about us. We exist to put the glory of God on display; that God can redeem people from slavery and make them His own. We exist every bit as much for that purpose as Old Testament Israel did. You, Christian, exist for that purpose. Next time we'll look at how we ought to live in light of that.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we have only briefly traced Your hand through so much of human history, we are reminded of Your goodness and Your grace. Father, You have shown grace upon grace by redeeming sinful human beings who were rebels against you. Father, we thank You that you put Yourself on display, and that You are the same yesterday, today and forever. That who You were as a redeeming God in the person of the second person of the Trinity there in the Old Testament is true for us today, that He is our Redeemer, Your own Son.

Thank you, Father, and I pray that as we contemplate Your providence, as we contemplate Your work through the Old Testament, that our own hearts would be stirred. Help us to remember that these things happened to them for examples upon whom the ends of the ages have come, that they would be for our benefits; for our benefit, and for our growth, for our confidence. We pray that You would help us to find our hope in You, the God who never changes, the God of covenant, the God of unfailing love Who always keeps Your Word.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.