

MeadowBrook Church | Summer 2026

# lifeGROUP

*Life together for the Kingdom of God*



## The Book of Exodus: From Slaves to a Holy Nation



# MeadowBrook CHURCH

*MeadowBrook seeks to **CONNECT** people to Christ and His church, **GROW** them as disciples to be disciplers, and equip them to **SERVE** through missions, ministry, and worship, all to **GLORIFY** God.*

**Christ Centered | Community Driven | Kingdom Focused**

**exodus (n.)** – a mass departure of people.

“Israel’s historical exodus out of Egypt forms a scriptural paradigm for God’s salvation, with the Prophets prophesying a second exodus out of exile for Israel and the nations, accomplished by the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the new exodus proclaimed in the New Testament.” – Michael Morales

The Exodus narrative is a beloved story that has been cherished by the people of faith throughout the generations and has been popularly depicted in various ways. However, the Exodus is not about Moses or even Israel, but about the God who delivers his people from their bondage by the blood of a lamb and establishes them as his people. Ultimately, the Exodus narrative is a shadow cast backward in time by the deliverance provided by Christ at the cross and the second exodus he is bringing about as he leads his saints in a holy and triumphal procession from this world into the next. May he be glorified and you blessed by this curriculum!



**Hunter Hindsman**

Life Groups and Associate Pastor

Special thanks to Chad Kitchens, Brent McCain, Jake McCain, Heather Clough, Taylor Hindsman, and Sarah Yarbrough for contributing to this curriculum in either their writing or editing. *If you are interested in writing or editing in the future, email [hunter@mbchurch.com](mailto:hunter@mbchurch.com) today.*

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\*All lessons are edited for content and compiled by Hunter Hindsman

# The Exodus Story is Our Story

Exodus 1 | April 12, 2026

What is your favorite Old Testament story that points you to Jesus?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Luke 24:1–27;
- Hebrews 1:1–4
- John 5:39–47

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“All that Moses wrote is of Christ, or relates to Christ, either as predicting Him by words and actions, or as illustrating His grace and glory.”  
– Augustine of Hippo

## **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** The Exodus story paves the way for the Church’s story.

**Major Application:** Rejoice in knowing that our God is faithful to his covenant promises, even when we cannot always see it.

### **Key Passage:**

*Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.* (Exodus 1:8 ESV)

The truths of Scripture are timeless. Every time we pick up the Scriptures, we receive a fresh word from the Lord. Exodus is no exception. This book is saturated with pictures and stories that, as we read them, we cannot help but find ourselves in them. The Exodus story, in other words, is our story. But how?

Much of the work we did throughout our time in Genesis was marked by the discipline of biblical theology, meaning worked hard to see the larger themes and threads of Scripture as a whole reflected in the particular stories of Genesis. To do this, we studied how the various events, people, and institutions in the Bible in light of the simple question: how does this point to Christ and his good news of salvation? And we will do the same with Exodus. For, as we read this story of an enslaved Ancient Near Eastern people who are brought into miraculous freedom by their God, we see that it is dripping with imagery that connects directly to the cross of Christ. The Exodus story is our story because, in it, God prepares his people for the final work that Christ accomplished for us 2000 years ago.

## **Major Themes in Exodus**

As we begin our study of Exodus, let’s highlight three themes that we will see developed throughout the book. Upon doing so, we will set the stage for greater study as we reflect on chapter one.

### ***Salvation***

The word “Exodus” literally means “the road out.” The book tells the grand story of how God rescued his people from the oppressive hand of Egypt. Because Egypt was bent on destroying God’s people,

they have historically been synonymous with sin. Israel, God's people under the Mosaic Covenant, foreshadows the Church, the fullness of God's people bought by the blood of Christ in the New Covenant. So, as we read of God's salvation of his people out of Egypt, we should be careful to see how such glorious truths translate to how God has brought salvation to us out of our sin.

### ***Covenant***

In Genesis, we see God making covenants with individual people (i.e, Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic). While these covenants, of course, have implications for larger groups of people, it is in Exodus, under the Mosaic Covenant, that God establishes the Israelites as his people under his authoritative law. Moses, standing as their representative, meets with God and mediates on Israel's behalf. This representation and mediation foreshadow Christ's mediatory and representative work on the cross, for on Calvary Christ stands in our place and intercedes to the Father on our behalf by his blood.

### ***Holiness***

While there are undoubtedly many other themes we could address, we will lastly highlight holiness. The God who redeems his people also calls his people to love and trust him. In other words, a Holy, redeeming God calls his people to be holy and devoted to him. As God establishes his covenant with them, he posits before them the law that they are to follow under his sovereign care. The gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that Christ has died for us, established a new and better covenant for us, and has a deep and satisfying rest for our souls waiting for us as we sit at his feet. Both the Exodus narrative and the gospel tell us that we are not only saved from something, but saved for something. We are not only saved from sin and death, but we are saved for holiness and life. May we see these truths and many others as we study this remarkable story together!

## **Exodus begins where Genesis ends.**

As we move into a brief reflection on chapter one, we need to gain our bearings on the timeline. The end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus overlap, so that we see three things. First, we see that the Abrahamic line has continued through the house of Jacob, with Joseph being a prime example of devotion to the Lord. Second, we see that the family is in Egypt, a place that, up to this point, has been marked by God's favor because of Joseph's radical devotion to his God. Third, we see that Joseph dies. While Joseph carries the blessings of God through Genesis, he is absent in Exodus and thus unable to provide for and protect his family and their descendants.

It is important for us to see that God had been faithful to Joseph and the Abrahamic line, for the text tells us that the people had both been fruitful and multiplied, harkening back to God's creation mandate given to Adam and Eve. Up to this point, God has protected and advanced the line even amid tragedy, scandal, and sin, so that at the beginning of Exodus, we see that what was once a small family is now a vast people.

## **A new king brings new persecution.**

After Joseph and his brothers pass, the lineage continues and is celebrated. That is, until the Pharaoh during Joseph's time also dies, and a new King of Egypt, who did not know Joseph, steps into power. We must remember that although the people of Israel had multiplied, they were still occupants of a land that was not their own. So, as the old Pharaoh passes and the new one arises, new persecutions come with him.

Indeed, verse 8 shows a shift in the scene. Where God's people had once enjoyed growth in the land, that growth was now hated by the new leadership. The new Pharaoh saw the growing population of the Hebrews as a threat to his authority and thus desired to put them in their place. To do so, he placed taskmasters over the people to "afflict them with heavy burdens." As cities and buildings were built, the oppressive hand of Pharaoh grew heavier. Yet, something remarkable appears in the text that is of particular significance for the Church today. Verse 12 tells us that "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel." Such a statement rings true not only for the Israelites in the day of the Exodus, but also for the Church today. Consider the Chinese underground Church. It is heavily persecuted by the government, yet as it attempts to stamp out the gospel's presence, it grows all the more.

The gospel of hope in Christ thrives in hopeless, Christless areas. May we, as the Church in 2026, take tremendous comfort that as we and our brothers and sisters are persecuted, either in minor ways or under oppressive regimes, the gospel of Jesus Christ goes forth in fervency.

As we turn our minds back to the Israelites, we see that their persecution only increases under the new Pharaoh, reaching a fever pitch with his proclamation to murder the firstborn son of each Hebrew family. This responsibility fell to the midwives throughout the land, leaving them with a tremendously difficult decision. Would they adhere to the dictates of the King and murder innocent children, or would they defy his orders and let the children live? Remarkably, they choose the latter over the former. Their reason? Because they feared God. Amid pressure to succumb to godless authority, their fear of God guided them. Undoubtedly, these midwives were threatened with their own execution if they did not obey, yet because they revered Yahweh, they stood their ground. And for that, they were blessed. With what? With families. Because the midwives protected the children of God's people, they too were given children and families. May we also consider our families as blessings from the Lord!

*Where today, in our local context, is similar courage needed? For example, in Etowah County, Christians are more likely to need to exhibit such courage in how they navigate youth sports rather than dealing with state persecution. What are some other areas like that?*

### **Chapter one closes without closure.**

For all the things we can take comfort in from this text—the gospel going forth amid persecution and that families are blessings from the Lord—we still see grave persecution and death. Indeed, chapter one ends bleakly with the Pharaoh advancing his murderous directive past the midwives to “all his people” such that even the common Egyptian was seemingly approved to headhunt innocent Hebrew children.

While it might be easy for us to simply turn the page and read ahead for comfort's sake, we must settle into the seemingly uncertain, bleak situation in which the Israelites have found themselves. As we close, consider three observations.

First, a people that was once a fledgling family is now being threatened with death from the highest authority. Temptations to hopelessness certainly abounded.

Secondly, we must understand that these people going through this trial were the descendants, not contemporaries, of Joseph. While they benefited from his prior faithfulness, there is currently no one who will lead them through this struggle. They do not have a leader who will guide them and comfort them amid this chaotic shift of slavery.

Third, we are left wondering how God will care for them. He has cared for the midwives, but his people have been thrown into slavery. Does God not care for his people? Was he impotent in stopping this from happening? If he could have stopped it, why did he allow it? Thoughts like these were certainly coursing through the minds of the Israelites. Undoubtedly, these are the same thoughts that course through our minds as we suffer varied trials and tribulations.

Therefore, we would be wise to allow ourselves to feel the tension that the Israelites experienced as we read of their story. For when we do, we see plainly that their story paves the way for our story in the cross. As we begin our time in this fantastic story, may we study Exodus with one eye in the text and one eye on the cross.

# Moses's Origin Story

## Exodus 2 | April 19, 2026

What is your favorite superhero origin story and why?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Romans 8:28;
- James 1:2, 17
- Hebrews 11:24–27
- Acts 7:20–29

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“To me, there is nothing more comforting than knowing that there is a God of providence who is aware not only of every one of my transgressions but of every one of my tears, every one of my aches, and every one of my fears.” – RC Sproul

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What's going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** God works all things together to bring about the salvation and sanctification of his people.

**Major Application:** Take comfort in the fact that God is not only sovereign over the good in our lives, but also that which is seemingly bad.

### **Key Passage:**

*God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.* (Exodus 2:25 ESV)

**Providence (n.)** – God's intentional governance of all things according to his decree for his good and glorious purposes. (Heb 1:3; Job 38:11; Isa 46:10–11; Ps 104, 135:6; Prov 16:33; Acts 27; Matt 10:29–31; Eph 1:11)

Throughout the Scriptures, we see a threefold paradigm arise regarding the character of God. He is 1) Sovereign, 2) Wise, 3) Good. In both the joyous times and the terrible, this paradigm reminds us that our God is never in the back recesses of heaven, wringing his hands, wondering how he is to respond to a situation. In fact, the exact opposite is taking place: he has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. (cf. Psa 103:19) Right now, God is actively ruling and reigning over every aspect of our lives. Though we might face many trials and tribulations, we are reminded by James that we can actually count it all joy. (cf. Jam 1:2) Further, as James also reminds us, when we experience truly good things, it is only because the Father of Lights, who gives good gifts, has allowed us to enjoy such kindness. Right now, God is sovereignly, wisely, and in his goodness, reigning over all. We can rest in his providential care, echoing Joseph's words in Genesis 50:20: what the enemy meant for evil will be turned to our good by our sovereign, wise, and good God.

But what does this have to do with Exodus 2? In this chapter, we see Moses' origin story. Moses records the tribe in which he was born, how he rose to his station in Egypt, and the infamous killing that drove him to the desert and even to his wife and son. Nowhere, until the very end of chapter 2, do we see God mentioned.

Even then, it is not connected to Moses but to the plight of the people. Are we then expected to believe that God's hand was not on Moses' life? Of course not! Throughout it all, God was sovereignly ordaining and allowing all things to come to pass so that his redemptive history would be advanced. For the remainder of this lesson, let's look at four key details of this passage in light of God's providence.

### **We see God's providence in the house of Levi.**

The opening of Chapter 2 is saturated with God's providence. While we might be quick to read over these first two verses, they tell us a tremendous amount of information. Notice that the names of Moses' father and mother are not given, yet their house is. This omission of names and provision of the house tells us something—namely that the house of Levi is a critical detail. God has providentially born Moses to the house of Levi, the house that would be established under God's rule as the priestly authority over God's people. (cf. Deut 18:5) What did priests do? They mediated with God on behalf of his people. They would offer sacrifices for the people's sins and provide them with spiritual guidance. They were the line that was tasked with going boldly before the throne of God and making intercession for his people. This was the line in which Moses was born. While we may not know the names of his parents, knowing the house from which Moses comes sheds light on the direction this story is taking.

### **We see God's providence in the Nile.**

As the story continues, Moses' mother places him in the basket and sends him down the river, hoping to spare him from Pharaoh's murderous decree. (cf. Exodus 1:22) At the right time, God providentially brings the Pharaoh's daughter to the river. While bathing in the river, she sees the basket. Upon opening the basket, the text tells us something important. Verse 6 tells us that the Pharaoh's daughter knew this was a Hebrew and yet still had pity on him. The one whose father decreed the murder of all Hebrew males, who should hate this baby and only seek his harm because his growth could mean her destruction, takes pity on him. Instead of killing Moses in that moment, his life was providentially spared through the pity and compassion of Pharaoh's daughter.

Further, Pharaoh's daughter allows a Hebrew to nurse her newfound child, but in God's providence, it is not any Hebrew mother that would nurse this child, but the child's very own. While she would eventually bring the child back to Pharaoh's daughter, by God's compassionate and caring hand, she was able to spend the first several months with her child. Any mother can tell you how special those first moments with their new baby are. As I write this, I am reminded of how my wife, Kelsey, looks at our two-month-old, Abigail. By God's sweet kindness, he allows mothers to bond uniquely with their babies. It is no different here. God allows Moses' actual mother to experience that sweet bond with him before sending him back to Pharaoh's daughter. Undoubtedly, this was a near-impossible task, but she must have known that doing so meant life for her child and not death that was almost certainly inevitable if she were to attempt to keep him.

### **We see God's providence in Midian.**

Indeed, Moses lives. He is taken back to Pharaoh's daughter and is even raised in the palace. This Hebrew baby boy, who was to be murdered under the decree of Pharaoh, is now raised in Pharaoh's house! Only by the providence of God do we see such a remarkable story.

But the story quickly shifts in verse 11. Moses, who is now all grown up—likely 40 years old—goes on a stroll in the Egyptian kingdom and comes across an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Notice that Moses knows he is not Egyptian, as the text states, “he went out to his people.” Further, the text tells us that the Hebrew was “one of his people.” Along the way, it clicked in Moses' mind that he was a Hebrew. Egypt might have been where he was raised, but it was certainly not his home. And so, as he sees this Egyptian beating a Hebrew, his heart burns with compassion for his kinsman, and according to Acts 7:24, he “avenged [the Hebrew] by striking down the Egyptian.”

Though Moses' motives were noble in desiring to protect his kinsman, we see the reflections of the old Levi who took vengeance into his own hands. As with Levi's vengeance, we see the effects of the fall—death leading to more death. In Moses's circumstances and actions, we see our desperate need for the grace-filled gospel of Jesus Christ.

While the Egyptian sinned against a Hebrew, we have sinned against God. God has every right to avenge his holy name by taking our lives, yet in Christ, he offers mercy and forgiveness. Indeed, expounding upon the Law, Jesus states, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matt. 5:38–39) Those who would recognize Christ as Lord will enjoy God’s grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Those who reject his lordship will feel the weight of God’s vengeance, much like the Egyptian here.

Upon learning that Moses’s vengeance for his kinsman had been made public, he leaves Egypt. A question must be asked here—did Moses leave Egypt out of fear or faith in God? In our text, Moses recounts that “[He] was afraid,” but the author of Hebrews attributes his departure to his faith in God. (cf. Heb 11:24–27) On the surface, these passages seem to contradict each other, but Dennis Johnson helps us to understand the preacher’s words in Hebrews. Johnson states, “Our preacher’s point seems to be that, although Moses was afraid of the king’s wrath, his faith, not his fear, was the dominant motive driving him out of Egypt.” (Johnson, “Hebrews” in *ESV Expository Commentary*, Vol. XII, emphasis original) In other words, while Moses was afraid of the Pharaoh (as anyone in Moses’ situation would be), his fear was not the primary motivation to leave Egypt. Instead, it was his faith in the invisible God, whom forty years later would reveal himself physically in the burning bush.

Leaving Egypt, God providentially takes him to Midian. There at a well, exhausted and likely reflecting on what had just taken place, he encounters seven daughters of the priest of Midian. They were attempting to obtain water from the well but kept being bothered by shepherds. Again, we see Moses’s compassion for others, first, in avenging his kinsman, and now in caring for these women. Indeed, we can see that God has providentially given Moses both conviction and compassion, characteristics he will need for the job God has for him in the future.

While in Midian, he was given Zipporah, one of the daughters of the priest, and was “content to dwell” with the family in the land. By Zipporah, he was given a son, whose name reflects Moses’ view of himself as a sojourner. We know from the next chapter that Moses dwelt in the land as a shepherd. (cf. Ex 3:1) Remarkably, in Midian, Moses was unwittingly being prepared to shepherd the largest flock he had ever seen—his own people. While Moses’s departure from Egypt and arrival in Midian were a whirlwind of events, God used this season of life to both prune and prepare him for the holy task of leading God’s people out of slavery into the promised land.

### **We see God’s providence in the people’s groaning.**

While verses 1–22 give us Moses’ origin story, verses 23–25 zoom out and finally show us that God is not absent. While Moses guides his flock in Midian, God makes preparations for his flock to be led out of Egypt. We see that the Pharaoh whom Moses fled had died, ushering in new leadership. However, under this new leadership, the oppression of God’s people was only heightened. In response, the people cried out to their God for help. Verses 24 and 25 show us four things God did in that moment.

First, God heard the prayers of his hurting people. Indeed, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psa 34:18 ESV) Second, God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is not to say that God had forgotten the covenant. Rather, in this moment, in light of his promises to the patriarchs, God acts decisively. Third, God saw the people of Israel. He was not distant from them, nor was he disinterested. Rather, he looked on them in their plight and lovingly saw them in their hurt. Fourth, **God knew**. According to his providential timing, God would act on their behalf.

Exodus 2 tells the origin story of Moses and offers a glimpse of hope for God’s hurting people. May we be quick to remember that the God of Exodus 2 is the same God we worship today. God is still in the business of redemption. Though there is very real pain, as in Moses’ life or that of the hurting people, may we take comfort in knowing that God hears our prayers, remembers his covenant, sees us, and acknowledges us. His plans do not look like our plans, yet we know his ways and thoughts are higher than our own. (cf. Isa 55:9) May we take comfort in the fact that God is not only sovereign over the good in our lives, but also that which is seemingly bad, knowing he uses all things to bring about the salvation and sanctification of his people.

# Drawing Near to God

## Exodus 3:1–12 | April 26, 2026

What has been the most pivotal “turning point” moment in your life so far?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Malachi 3:6–7
- James 4:1–10;
- John 14–16;
- Acts 1:1–11;
- Psalm 23–24

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“There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us.” – Richard Sibbes

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** The unchanging God rescues his people.

**Major Application:** Draw near to God and serve in his power on his terms.

**Key Passage:** *He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”* (Exodus 3:12 ESV)

## Turning Points

Everyone has turning point moments in their life. Whether it’s getting a driver’s license, graduating, getting married, having a baby, losing a loved one, getting a new job, and so on, we can all look back on these moments and see how things were one way before and completely different after. In hindsight, and with the eyes of faith, we often see how God was at work in such moments. The most significant turning point in our lives is our conversion. Whether you recall your conversion as a season or as a moment in your life or even if you struggle to remember your conversion because of the age in which you converted, the moment of your salvation marks a change in the trajectory of your life—a new beginning for a new life according to the new nature given to us in Christ by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

Whether this was Moses’s “conversion” moment when he placed his faith in Yahweh is hard to tell, but it’s certainly a turning point in his life—at the age of 80 no less! Things for him would never be the same.

*Have you thought about Moses’s age before? What does that communicate to you?*

## **Draw near to God when he calls you in the manner he defines.**

*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8 ESV)*

In his new life post-Egypt, Moses took up the calling of a shepherd—an important vocation in the history of Israel and for understanding what God communicates about good leadership. While he was living the quiet life and tending to his flock, God appeared to him at Horeb/Sinai, the Mountain of God. Here, God condescended to, once again, converse with man. Eden was the previous mountain of God where the pre-incarnate Christ walked and talked with Adam, and here, at Horeb, the pre-incarnate Christ (the angel of the Lord, fully divine yet a distinct person from the Father) appeared in a flame of fire to talk with Moses. While Moses did not immediately recognize it as an appearance of God, God appearing in a fire both recalls God's appearance as a flaming pot in his covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 and anticipates his continued appearance as a pillar of fire in the rest of Exodus.

In this mini and temporary Eden, so to speak, God called Moses's name twice, which Doug Stuart notes was an ancient way of "expressing endearment, that is, affection and friendship. Thus, Moses would have understood immediately that he was being addressed by someone who loved him and was concerned about him. Before inviting him near, God instructed Moses to take off his sandals because he was on holy ground. While we do not have explicit reasons for God's declaration as to why the sandals are inappropriate, a few instructive thoughts can be shared I believe on this subject.

First, God sets the means by which we approach him. There's no other way to God than the way he prescribes. Moses believed God and acted in that faith and in the fear of the Lord. Second, Moses's sandals would have been made from leather, i.e., material made from the skins and hides of dead animals. Thus, the death that Moses wore on his feet functioned as a barrier between Moses and the Holy Mountain in which God was revealing himself. And, as a mini-Eden of sorts, death was not welcome in the presence of the one who was life itself. For death is the curse of our sin, the reality of our spiritual state before God at birth, the emblem of our works before God (cf. Heb 6:1, 9:14), and the culmination of our separation from God—and by God's grace, he instructed Moses to remove such a barrier so that he might draw near into his presence.

For as Psalm 24 states <sup>3</sup> *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?* <sup>4</sup> *He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.* And thanks be to God that he continues to remove every barrier that separates man and God! And as Gregory of Nazianzus exhorted those in need of faith, "Let him who is about to touch the holy land which the feet of God have trodden put [shoes] off, as Moses did upon the mount, that he may bring there nothing dead; nothing to come between man and God." Put off your dead works which merit nothing before God, and draw near to God in faith in Jesus Christ, the one who is the way, the truth, and the life and the exclusive means through which one comes to the Father (cf. John 14:6).

Additionally, the removal of sandals communicated Moses's servant status before God. He drew near with nothing to the living God to serve him faithfully. Moses feared the Lord, perceiving his unholiness as indicated by the hiding of his face. And there in the posture of humble faith, Moses conversed with the Living God.

***What does it mean and look like to draw near to God today? What barriers stand in your way sometimes? In other words, what are the sandals you need to take off of your soul to tread on the holy ground with God?***

## **God knows the plight of his people and condescends to rescue them.**

God, being the omniscient one, knew the sufferings and heard the cries of his people. He was not unaware, but working according to his sovereign purposes that he might deliver them at the proper time. For in his mercy, he purposed to come down and deliver them from the burdens of their slavery so that they might worship and walk with God. God's rescue is always oriented toward increasing the people's worship.

In Exodus, we see who God is. He is the Almighty who rescues his people. While the “coming down” in Exodus was figurative, in Christ, God truly came down, with the Son of God taking on flesh for us and our salvation. Thus, Exodus reminds us of the greater deliverance. God knew the plight of his people enslaved to sin, and he came down to rescue them from sin so that we might walk in the newness of life as living sacrifices in worship to our great and merciful God.

*How does God knowing your sufferings bring comfort?*

*What does God deliver us from in Christ? Are you walking in that freedom?*

*Have you considered the connection between deliverance and worship before? Why is that important?*

### **God empowers his people with his presence to do the work he assigns them.**

Moses asked God an honest question: How in the world am I going to go before Pharaoh and pull this off? And God gave him the answer: I will be with you—the same assurance Jesus gave his disciples when he commissioned them in Matthew 28:18–20 and again in Acts 1:8. The presence of God is our strength. In many ways, as Alec Motyer noted, the burning bush not only reveals God but also is a powerful picture of God’s work in us:

“If the flame symbolized the presence of God, should Moses have seen the bush as a symbol of himself? The juxtaposition of the transcendent God in all his holiness and vitality and the ordinary, earthly bush! is a powerful metaphor for the indwelling, transforming presence of God with his people. This is the implication of his words to Moses. . . . Although he could have delivered Israel by the mere exercise of his personal presence and power, it was God’s choice to do it through a chosen emissary, whom he would accompany on the mission. It is always so. No-one who goes at the behest of God ever goes alone. The ‘I’ who accompanies is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God also of Moses.”

As we seek to be faithful in our various callings and ministries, we must keep in mind the same truth. For securing the salvation of our children, for instance, is just as impossible a task as delivering the Israelites from Pharaoh when considered according to human strength alone. Whether we’re evangelizing a classmate, discipling a person a little younger than us, or teaching Life Group, we need to go about our ministry in God’s strength, not our own. Our ministry is effective only because God is with us, and we must not forget that truth.

*What is a calling in your life in which you need to be reminded of God’s presence with you?*

*How do we apply this in the day-to-day? Is it a simple remembrance or something else?*

# The Great I AM

## Exodus 3:13–15 | May 03, 2026

What is your most important possession and why?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Malachi 3:6;
- James 1:13–18;
- Hebrews 13:8
- Exodus 34:5–7
- See Lesson

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“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” – A.W. Tozer

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** God is.

**Major Application:** Worship.

**Key Passage:** *God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”* (Exodus 3:14 ESV)

While C.S. Lewis is correct to point out that what God thinks of us is more fundamental than what we think of God, it nevertheless remains the case that, from our point of view, what we think about God is the eternally significant question. And Moses, perceiving that he was speaking with the Living God, asked the all-important question: “What is your name?”

Alec Motyer unpacked the significance of Moses’s anticipation of the people’s question when he wrote that:

“What were the people really asking for when they wanted to know God’s name? In the Bible, names often had a serious significance, and in the case of the Lord his ‘name’ was his ‘story’; it summed up who he was and what he wanted to make known about himself. In other words, asking Moses for God’s name was a shorthand way of saying, ‘What revelation of God do you bring?’ It was in these terms that the Lord met and answered the question Moses expected to be asked.”

In short, the name of God revealed the essence and character of God. Thus, later, when God revealed his long name when the back of his glory passed by Moses in the rock, we see God revealed himself as:

<sup>5</sup> *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.* <sup>6</sup> *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”* (Exodus 34:5-7 ESV)

Every religion offers an answer or a non-answer to that question, but only one can logically possess the truth. What you believe about God is of the utmost importance; thus, where you get your information about God is likewise of the utmost importance. Moses teaches us here that God's own words are the reliable source on which we should stake our opinions about God—and by the work of the Holy Spirit, we believe the Scriptures to be the inspired Word of God who reveals that Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh who reveals the glory from the Father, full of grace and truth. So, in other words, if you want to know about God, look to Jesus and to his book, the Bible.

*How did Moses's interaction here drive home the importance of theology and thinking deeply about God?*

*How do bad ideas about God show up in problematic ways?*

## **God is.**

“The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.” – Second London Baptist Confession of Faith

When we reflect upon God's revelation to Moses that his name is “I AM,” we discover profound truths about who God is that transcend the limits of human comprehension. For in this answer, we see the foundation for the following doctrines with some supporting passages:

<sup>24</sup> *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.* (Acts 17:24-25 ESV)

**Self-Existent (“Aseity”)** – God is entirely independent, in need of nothing, and self-existent.

*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* (1 John 4:16 ESV)

*the LORD is one . . .* (Deuteronomy 6:4c ESV)

**Indivisible (“Simple”)** – God is not a composite being nor does he have the potential to be divided within himself.

This doctrine safeguards the primacy, eternality, and incorruptibility of God (for if God were made up of parts, then the parts would exist prior to the whole and require a higher composer) while also communicating that God essentially is his attributes such that love is not merely something he possesses but something he is. It also removes the wrongheaded thinking that somehow in God there's division between divine love and divine justice. God is never double-minded, nor is such even a possibility for him, in other words.

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* (Psalm 90:2 ESV)

**Eternal** – God exists outside of time and its passage, having no beginning nor end and experiencing no change due to succession.

**Immortal** – God cannot die.

*For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.* (Malachi 3:6 ESV)

**Immutable** – God cannot change.

“By the immutability of God is meant that he is incapable of change, either in duration of life or in nature, character, will, or happiness. In none of these, nor in any other respect, is there any possibility of change. This is implied in his absolute perfection. Perfection permits neither increase (as though he lacks) nor decrease (as though he can lose). Change must be for the worse or for the better, but God cannot become worse or better.” – James Boyce, Founder of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

<sup>28</sup> *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.* <sup>29</sup> *He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.* (Isaiah 40:28-29 ESV)

*And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.* (1 Samuel 15:29 ESV)

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* (James 1:17 ESV)

**Impassible** – God cannot suffer loss, nor does he possess passions that fluctuate or could be tempted.

“God’s good affections . . . are truly and properly said of God (of course with the removal of every imperfection from them); and they are nothing other than God’s ardent will towards us, and its power and effect in creatures. These are classified by different names, according to the variety of things that are their object, and according to the ways in which they are performed, and their various effects.” – Leiden Synopsis

God shows his infinite compassion toward creation without any pituitary gland producing oxytocin to spur it on. God loves perfectly but is never overcome with infatuation. He executes wrath toward sin but is never hot-headed, never over the top. He is jealous for his glory, his people, and the human soul, but he is never “green.” God’s affections describe the perfection of his unchanging will toward his creatures and their effect in their lives.

We have passions that can be corrupted, enticed, and led astray. God displays all the perfections indicated by the Scriptures without any possibility of corruption, temptation, or reactive fluctuations. He transcends our every weakness. Nothing can corrupt him. It’s not even in the realm of possibility.

Each of these attributes touches on God’s infinite perfections, which give us an unshakeable confidence in the fact that God is who he says he is and that what he says he will do for us will certainly come about—for he is the Great I AM.

## **God is a personal God.**

Our God, being the Great I AM, infinite in his perfections, does not mean that he is disinterested in us as his creatures. He is Yahweh, and he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is a covenantal God who invites his image bearers to know and enjoy him in a relationship of eternal friendship through his Son and our mediator, Jesus Christ.

<sup>14</sup> *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,* <sup>15</sup> *from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,* <sup>16</sup> *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,* <sup>17</sup> *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,* <sup>18</sup> *may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,* <sup>19</sup> *and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* <sup>20</sup> *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,* <sup>21</sup> *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* (Ephesians 3:14-21 ESV)

# Identity in the I AM

## Exodus 3:15–4:9 | May 10, 2026

Who is the most trustworthy person you know and why?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Psalm 135:13
- Isaiah 25:1
- Hosea 12:5
- Matthew 28:18-20
- John 8:58
- Revelation 1:8

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“The nature of God is made known to us by his name.” – Petrus van Mastricht

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** God’s mission rests on the power of the sender, not the sent.

**Major Application:** Focus not on your limitations but on God’s character.

**Key Passage:** *God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exodus 3:15 ESV)*

In a world full of sin and fallenness, trust is a valuable and rare commodity. How many times have you put your trust in someone, expecting them to follow through, only to be disappointed? In truth, we are more often surprised when someone actually does what they say, proving the exception to the rule! If you are an employer and an employee follows through with a commitment, you elevate that person in your mind as being more trustworthy, setting your mind at peace when they commit to a task. If you are purchasing a product and the vendor demonstrates exceptional customer service, are you not more willing to seek the services from that vendor again, having confidence that even if things do not appear to be right, they will make it so?

Think of persons in your life to whom you most place trust. Your parents? Your spouse? Your best friend? Your pastors? However, even those we trust with our own lives or even with the lives of those whom we love the most such as our children, can disappoint or fail us. And in truth, we fail them as well; no one is fully trustworthy. To give a more direct example, the first point of the twelve points of the Boy Scout Law is “A Scout is trustworthy.” Think about that for a moment. There are two elements to consider here. The first is the name of the person... “A Scout”. Each point of The Scout Law begins with the subject, the Boy Scout, whose title predetermines your expectations of them. The second part, “is trustworthy”, defines the expected character of the Scout. So, according to the Boy Scout Law, a Scout, by their very title, is someone you are supposed to be able to trust, no matter the circumstance.

In our previous text in Exodus, God introduces Himself for the first time by name “I am who I am” or “I will be who I will be”. As a brief reflection back into ancient near east culture, a name represented the character and being of the person. Think of all the names in Scripture that we search diligently for when contemplating the names of our kids. We look into the character of that person, hoping the character of that name will be somehow instilled into whom we give the name. Just as a fun exercise to prove this, how many people that you know are running around with the name Jezebel or Judas? See my point? So, as we break today’s passage down into sections, we will see how Yahweh demonstrates to Moses the full trustworthiness and power of His name.

## **God’s Faithful Name is Affirmed in the Past and Carries Us into the Future**

So often we overlook the meaning of simple words. The English phrase “thus you shall say” is not just a simple transitional phrase as one would think. In Hebrew, this phrase functioned as the “Royal Messenger” formula. It designates that what follows is a declaration spoken from a king, carrying the full weight of the one who spoke it. So for Moses, God is telling him that he will not be speaking words of his own improvisation, but he will be Yahweh’s ambassador, speaking Yahweh’s words to His people and to Egypt. In verse 15, the phrase in English, spoken in third person to the Israelites, is “I will be who I will be”. By introducing His name, establishing the authority and character of His name, God is telling His people exactly who He is, who He will be to the people, and what authority and power He has. He is not some obscure Egyptian deity, but He is the very God who chose and established their nation, setting it on its current and future trajectory. Furthermore, by this very statement God is declaring that His covenant to their fathers continues to them. By reminding them of His past faithfulness, He is declaring His future faithfulness. He is unchanging, and He WILL deliver them from slavery and into the Promised Land because the character of His very name is at stake. Furthermore, He affirms this even more so by declaring to the people, through Moses, that this His covenant name will be remembered and desired by His people forevermore. (Isaiah 25:1) Here, in Exodus, God is personally introducing Himself to His people, and as we shall see later in Exodus, to the entire world.

In verses 16-22, God repeats His covenantal history with their fathers, repeats His covenantal promises He made to their Fathers, and even now explains to Moses His immediate plans for His people. God is laying it all out, instructing what is to be said to Egypt, stating what Egypt’s response will be, and how He will respond with power and might, securing their release, and even promising they will leave their enslavement in Egypt with plunder. He is essentially confirming His future plans for them based on His very Name, the cornerstone of His faithfulness and covenant.

*We started today talking about how brands or titles give us confidence. Now that we’ve looked at the “Cornerstone” of who God is, how does the name of Jesus—which literally means Yahweh Saves—provide more security than any other name or title you rely on (such as your job title, your family name, or your reputation)?*

## **Learning to Trust in the Midst of Wavering Faith and Doubt**

In response to God, Moses sounds a lot like us. . . . “But what if?” In verses 2 through 9 that follow, Moses wrestles with doubt, even projecting a possible future unbelief by the people. However during this moment, God patiently demonstrates to Moses His power by providing three distinct signs for Moses that are aimed to show Moses the tools that are at his disposal.

As a first demonstration, God transforms Moses’ staff into a serpent, then tells him to pick it up by the tail, returning it to the staff. Besides allusions back to Genesis 3, the use of the word serpent, would have directed the audience’s memory to the authority of the pharaoh. As Egyptian archaeology has revealed, the serpent, specifically the cobra, was the emblem of power for Egyptian kings. By telling Moses to pick up a deadly viper by the tail (a risky move and a BIG “no no” in snake handling), God is demonstrating His power over the perceived power and authority of Pharaoh.

God's second sign demonstrates His absolute power over sickness and death. Moses places his hand inside his bosom (near his heart, the Hebrew center of a man) and withdraws it revealing a hand "leprosy like snow". The Hebrew word used here is Tzara'at. While often translated as "leprosy," does not refer to modern Hansen's Disease, but a "living death" where the flesh loses all appearance of life, appearing corpse-like. In Egyptian culture, this condition would have rendered a person socially and religiously dead. By His command to repeat the action, a hand clean and whole is revealed, by which God proves to Moses his power even over flesh and life.

God's third sign during His training with Moses ends differently than the first two. The first two signs are carried out immediately while Moses is standing at the burning bush and just as quickly are reversed. However, the third sign is not carried out at this time and is not reversed. During His third instruction, God tells Moses that if they still do not believe him, that he is to pour water from the Nile onto dry ground and it will turn into blood, a foreshadowing of things to come—and, as will be explained at length in the section on the plagues, this would be a direct blow at the heart of idolatrous Egyptian worship.

In contrast to the cleansing, life-giving waters of the Nile, blood, in Egyptian culture, represented uncleanness, violence, and death. These facts would be well known to Moses, a former prince in Egypt, as well as the Hebrew people who had lived the past 400 years in Egypt. So what is God telling Moses? If my people don't believe you, I am going to "kill" Hapi and all the god bloodlines linked through Osiris to show everyone exactly who I am and the power I wield.

Turning the water into blood would affect ALL of Egyptian life and religion, essentially destroying their civilization as they know it. It would be an absolute catastrophe physically, economically, and spiritually. So by God telling Moses, I am going to turn water into blood was not some simple trick to turn heads, but a direct assault on the very heart of Egypt, her gods, her life, and her power. Furthermore, the blood on dry ground would serve almost as a crime scene, like someone had been killed and their blood spilt on the bare ground, defiling the earth.

*We often say we trust God's Name, yet we still obsess over "Plan B" and "What if?" scenarios. Which part of God's character (His sovereignty, His presence, His justice, or His mercy) do you find the hardest to trust when you are standing in your own "What if" moment?*

## **The Covenant Name and Faithfulness of Yahweh Carries into the Name of His Son Jesus**

So, how are we, as 21st century believers, to respond to this narrative? Not to get lost in the weeds, but today's passage immediately follows God's revelation of His personal name to Moses. This is followed by the reminder of His covenant promise made centuries before to the patriarchs, the revelation of God's game plan to be carried out through Moses, and finally the confirmation by the use of physical demonstrations of His power. God is the one who always follows through without even the possibility of failing.

To keep the perspective on these passages, we again remind ourselves that these words were written for the hearing and the faith of the Israelites as they are being delivered into the Promised Land. This is their past written by Moses to remind them to trust in Yahweh for their future. For us, has God not provided the same blueprint and promises? Through His Word has He not shown us the past, delivered us in the present, and now promises us a future? In the New Testament, we see this very pattern laid out in the life, name, power, and authority of Jesus. And through Jesus, God has revealed Himself to us personally, reminding us of His New Covenant in the name of Jesus Christ. Through His Word, God has laid out His plan for time and space and demonstrated His power and love for his people through grace, mercy, and salvation. What we see in this passage should give us unshakable hope in God's plans and purposes for His people. We know His Name, His promises, and His plan, and we are promised that we will see His power exercised over every authority in heaven and earth (see Matt 28:18-20) — even over death itself. He is the conquering God in whose very name we place our trust. Today, this moment, rest in His name and His promises, trusting Him to follow through with His covenant to you and to all His chosen people. His is the only Name in whom you can place your full trust and hope for now and eternity.

# The Shaping of the Servant

Exodus 4:10–26 | May 17, 2026

What's the difference between true and false humility?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Genesis 15:13–21, 17:9–14, 22:1–12
- Exodus 1:22
- Luke 22:31–34, 54–62
- John 21
- Acts 2–3
- 2 Corinthians 12:9–10, 13:4

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“God does not save men to-day by the strength of his ministers, but by their weakness.” – Charles Spurgeon

## H. Highlight a Key Passage

## E. Explain the Passage

- What's going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

## A. Apply the Passage

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

## R. Respond in Prayer

## T. Tell Others about It

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** Our confidence in ministry is in God, not ourselves.

**Major Application:** Let God's presence empower you for the task at hand.

**Key Passage:** *“Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”* (Exodus 4:12 ESV)

Even with the massive weight of God's name and the absolute assurance of His presence, Moses does not march confidently into action. The Maker of the universe has just promised to be with him, yet Moses is still stuck on “But what if?” This struggle sets the stage perfectly for God's next move: the shaping of His servant.

Let's be clear...Moses is far from a finished product. Before he can lead a nation, he has to learn to actually trust the Name of the one sending him. Let's dive into our text and see how God patiently handles Moses' doubts, proves His power, and purposefully molds this flawed, reluctant man into the leader Israel needs for the mission ahead.

## **Our confidence rests in God, who is with us, not our ability to perform.**

Moses's first move to is not to pack his bags with anticipation but to persuade God of his personal shortcomings of either a physical or linguistic barrier such as a stutter, or perhaps claiming he was simply slow in speech. From an earthly perspective, this concern makes sense, for the Egyptian magicians were renowned for their mastery of speech and persuasion—something Moses would have known from his upbringing. Yet as this conversation unfolds, we realize this objection isn't really about ability at all; it's an excuse carefully constructed to conceal a fearful heart, dressing up his fear as if it were humility.

However, God dismantles this false humility. God does not heal Moses' mouth, nor does He offer him a crash course in public speaking. Instead, He redirects Moses' focus back to himself—the one who made man's mouth (v. 11).

God shifts Moses' attention away from his own limitations to whether he will trust the One who is sending him, promising to be with Moses's mouth and to teach him what he shall speak. The Lord does not promise to make Moses a master orator. He promises to be with him, assuring Moses that the God who is sending him will also guide his speech and supply exactly what is needed at the exact moment it is needed. Moses' confidence, therefore, is not to rest in his own ability to perform, but to rest in the absolute faithfulness of the One who goes with him.

*Where do sometimes dress up our own fears in the garbs of a false humility?*

## **God graciously brings his followers out of disobedience into obedience.**

Despite this incredible assurance, Moses digs his heels in, dropping the facade of inadequacy in an attempt to forfeit the mission altogether. Moses might sound polite, but he's doing all he can to avoid obeying. His response is a deliberate, stubborn way of saying, "Send literally anyone else." Moses does not merely believe he is unable to go; he just does not want to go.

God's response is immediate and terrifying. The Hebrew phrasing uses the analogy of a physical description of flaring nostrils to communicate God's righteous anger toward sin, particularly Moses's. The interaction is actually a movement of grace toward Moses. One, Moses is not immediately consumed by God's wrath. His mission is still a go. And, two, God uses this exchange to reorient Moses's fear of the Egyptians back to the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. For, disobeying God is infinitely more dangerous than facing Pharaoh. God is telling Moses that a servant of God must be fearless before men precisely because the servant answers to a much higher, much more formidable authority than men. And three, the Lord graciously provides Aaron to be a help to Moses in his weakness.

Every barrier Moses threw up God removed according to his providential purpose. In fact, long before this conversation at the burning bush had even begun, God was already setting his solution in motion—Aaron was literally walking in route to meet Moses! By God's provision, Aaron would be Moses's mouth before the Egyptians and help Moses connect with the Israelites, to whom Moses had largely been a stranger to for the past 80 years. And as a final note of grace, God promises that when Aaron sees Moses, "he will be glad in his heart." Moses is stepping into a daunting, overwhelming calling, and God uses this joyful family reunion to comfort His reluctant servant with the relational reassurance he needs.

Finally, in verse 17, God gives Moses one last command: "Take this staff in your hand." He has just given Moses a mouthpiece in Aaron, and now He is giving him a visual aid. God doesn't simply hand Moses a sword to fight Pharaoh, nor does He hand him a royal scepter of authority, but tells Moses to pick up his shepherd's staff. Why? Because every time Moses grips that familiar piece of wood, he is reminded that the power to deliver Israel does not come from his own abilities but through God. God provides this visual cue to teach Moses to stop staring at his own limitations and start submitting to the Lord who leads him like a shepherd.

Now, having submitted to God's call, Moses must now face the practical reality of leaving his life in Midian. Through his marriage to Zipporah, Moses had been legally incorporated into Jethro's household and worked for him. In his obedience, he sought to prioritize God's mission but not to the neglect of his responsibility to his father-in-law. So, in respect to Jethro, Moses politely requests to leave in a manner common to his culture, while keeping the full details of God's plan he was just beginning to understand to himself. God again reassures Moses, putting to bed perhaps yet another fear that might have been lingering in his heart.

*How does God's response to Moses's stubbornness challenge and encourage you? In what areas do you tend to be as stubborn as Moses was?*

## **God prepares Moses for the upcoming conflict.**

### **God reveals how Moses will proceed.**

As Moses departs, God gives him a final briefing, detailing how this cosmic conflict will unfold. First, God prepares Moses for a prolonged, brutal struggle that will unfold systematically, step-by-step until the entire Egyptian empire is totally dismantled. Second, God defines the true issue at the heart of the Exodus. As God's firstborn, God was communicating that Israel—by God's purposes of election—were elevated above the one who was being worshipped as the "Son of Ra." God was confronting the entire idolatrous system of Egypt in order that his people might be released from the authority of Pharaoh that they might be able to serve and worship the true and living God. Lastly, this comes with the warning of the final plague. Pharaoh's willful rebellion against God and oppression of his firstborn would come at the steep price of losing his own firstborn. Pharaoh's conflict was a fool's errand from the jump.

### **God ensures Moses will proceed in holiness.**

As Moses finally embarks on his journey to do God's will, the narrative takes a shocking, almost bizarre turn: God seeks to put Moses to death. The irony here is staggering. Just a few verses ago, God told Moses he was safe from the men trying to kill him in Egypt, yet now, the one trying to kill him is God Himself! So, what's happening?

For the last 40 years Moses had lived as a Midianite, not as a Hebrew. Possibly out of deference to his Midianite wife, Zipporah, or maybe his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses had neglected the covenantal sign of circumcision commanded by God in Genesis 17 by failing to circumcise one of his sons. Moses had a holiness problem; he was not submitting to God's ordinance that indicated Israel's "set apart" status in the Old Covenant. God's actions made it clear: Moses could not lead God's people publicly while harboring a covenantal rebellion that merited being cut off from the very people God was working to assemble.

Zipporah realizes exactly what is happening and acts decisively, circumcising her son and touching the feet of Moses with it. Although perhaps confusing to our current context, by touching the blood of the covenant to Moses, she is legally and ritually applying the blood of the innocent son to the guilty father—averting God's judgment in a manner that foreshadows how Christ would ultimately avert God's judgment toward Moses's sin. Zipporah understood the significance of what was occurring, which is why she referred to Moses as a bridegroom of blood. She understood that her bridegroom was purchased by the blood of the covenant. In other words, her husband was still alive because the wrath of God was appeased by the shedding of blood—even if ultimately the effective power was not in the type and shadow but in what was to come.

Through this, Moses had to learn a terrifying but necessary lesson: God is holy, and his people must also be holy. God will not be treated casually, but the grace in this dark scene is profound. Moses was a dead man walking, but through the shedding of blood, he was restored, reclaimed, and finally ready to go to do God's work of deliverance in Egypt.

## **Conclusion**

As we come to the end of this passage, we are invited to slow down and consider carefully the God who has revealed Himself here. Exodus 4:10–26 does not ultimately leave us impressed with Moses but leaves us with a better understanding of the God who stands behind him.

In these verses, we have watched Moses hesitate, question, and even resist. Yet at every turn, the focus shifts back to God. He is the One who promises His presence. He is the One who teaches, who sends, who confronts, and who preserves His covenant. The mission advances not because Moses finds courage within himself, but because God is determined to accomplish what He has declared. Again and again, the narrative directs our eyes to His Name, His patience with a fearful servant, His holiness that cannot be ignored, and His unwavering commitment to His covenant promises. As you go about your week, take time to pause and consider this God and how we are to reflect his character as we submit to his good and perfect will.

# Fickle Faith

Exodus 4:27–5:23 | May 24, 2026

Who is the most trustworthy person you know and why?

## *Additional Passages:*

- Exodus 15:13-14
- Psalm 105:23-25
- Romans 9:17-18
- 1 Peter 4:12-13
- Mark 9:14–29
- Matthew 17:20

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“It’s not the intensity of our faith, but the object of our faith that saves.” – D. A. Carson

## **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

## **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

## **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

## **R. Respond in Prayer**

## **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** God’s deliverance often begins in places of desperation.

**Major Application:** Anchor your reality in the character of God rather than the circumstances of the moment.

**Key Passage:** *“Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.’”* (Exodus 5:22–23 ESV)

In our previous study, “The Shaping of the Servant,” we looked at God’s patient and purposeful work to mold the character of Moses. Let’s be clear: Moses was not naturally ready for the task. He was a flawed man who made excuses and resisted fully submitting himself to God.

As we previously read, God laid out His plan to Moses and conveyed His faithfulness through His covenant Name (Yahweh). This Name carried the weight of the Abrahamic Covenant, revealing not just a title, but His character and His very being. Yet, Moses struggled even after physically experiencing a glimpse of God’s sovereign power. Even after securing the blessing of his father-in-law to depart, Moses failed to act in corporate solidarity with his people by neglecting to circumcise his son—a failure that almost cost him his life. Moses needed to learn to believe God if he was going to face the challenges ahead. In fact, Chapters 4–6 deal with this exact issue: Will Israel believe?

## **A Reunion of Brothers and Kin**

While we aren’t told if Moses had any contact with Aaron during his 40-year exile in Midian, God orchestrates a purposeful meeting in the “wilderness” at Horeb, the “mountain of God.” This is the site of the burning bush and the place where God promised Moses they would one day worship—a promise serving as proof that God would deliver His people. Notably, this is the same mountain where God would later give His Law.

At this mountain, brothers are reunited and the plan of God is shared. In unison, they take the message of deliverance to the leaders of Israel, demonstrating signs as proof of God’s power. The response is encouraging: the leaders embrace the message that Yahweh had “visited” His people and knew of their affliction. Their response is appropriate—they bow their heads and worship. Yet, a looming question remains: Were they prepared for the war to come?

*Why is it easier to begin something than to finish something?*

## **The Opening Volley of the War**

Make no mistake: God had been completely transparent with Moses. He was not coming to Egypt to provide a quiet escape; He was coming to bring war. Pharaoh had declared war on God’s son (Israel) years ago, and now God was answering.

The opening salvo in verse one is not a negotiation. The phrase, “Thus says the Lord,” was used by ambassadors when a sovereign king was making an unambiguous demand. Moses and Aaron effectively dropped a sovereignty challenge on Pharaoh, putting him in a tight corner.

Pharaoh’s response is not just a “no.” By asking “Who is the Lord?”, he denies the legitimacy and authority of the Hebrew God. He is essentially saying, “I don’t acknowledge this person’s existence. He has no power or jurisdiction here, so his request is denied. Period.”

## **The Strategy of the “Three-Day Journey”**

Moses and Aaron’s response is brilliant, engaging Pharaoh from a legal and economic angle. Invoking a “three-day journey” was a strategic move:

- **Religious Necessity:** Israel could not worship in Goshen because their sacrifices (rams/bulls) were venerated in the Egyptian religious system. To sacrifice them publicly would be an “abomination” to the Egyptians, likely sparking riots or stonings (Ex. 8:26).
- **Legal Jurisdiction:** In that day, a “three-day journey” was a common expression for removing oneself entirely from a ruler’s borders and jurisdiction. To worship God properly, Israel needed a clean separation from their masters.
- **A Test of Reasonableness:** While some see this as ‘deceiving’ Pharaoh, it was actually a test of his reasonableness toward a minimal request. It was a recognized legal right for a subjugated people to honor their native deities.

Eventually, Moses plays the “pestilence” and “sword” card (v. 3), speaking Pharaoh’s language: economics and pragmatic self-interest. He is warning Pharaoh that if the Hebrews aren’t allowed to fulfill their legal duty to their God, the resulting divine “pestilence” would destroy Pharaoh’s workforce.

God has put Pharaoh in a “Catch-22.” If he acknowledges the demand, he admits Yahweh has authority over him. If he denies it, he denies a basic legal right and risks war.

## **The Escalation of Conflict**

Pharaoh responds with a cruel move in psychological warfare. To maintain the massive construction scale of cities like Pithom and Raamses, Egypt relied on a steady supply of straw from agricultural threshing floors. Straw was vital because its decay chemically strengthened the mud. By removing the supply but keeping the quota, Pharaoh targets the Hebrews’ minds. He claims they are “idle” (slack), and that their spiritual thoughts are merely “lying words.” He intends to fix that by crushing their mental and physical capacity for anything but labor.

Pharaoh’s move is also designed to shatter corporate solidarity. By making the Hebrew “foremen” responsible for enforcing the quotas, he turns brother against brother. The Hebrew foremen now become the face of the oppression. When these foremen deliver the command, they use the same messenger formula—“Thus says Pharaoh”—that Moses used for God. This is a deliberate—albeit foolish—power play to demonstrate that Pharaoh, not some “wilderness God,” is the absolute sovereign.

## **The Cruel Success in Shattering Hope**

Pharaoh's strategy appears to be a resounding success. The people are scattered, the taskmasters are relentless, and the Hebrew foremen are beaten. The result is exactly what Pharaoh hoped for: the people bypass Moses and Aaron to appeal directly to Pharaoh, acknowledging him as the one who holds all the power.

Victory over the "rebellion" seems imminent. As the foremen plead their case, Pharaoh offers a final, demoralizing character attack: "You are idle, you are idle!" This double statement crushes the men. They realize there is no hope, and their situation is now worse than ever before.

*How does the enemy work in the same way today? How ought we to respond to such attacks on our souls?*

## **Who is to Blame?**

Here, theological tension and despair collide. The wordplay in the Hebrew is amazing: the word for "met" in verse 20 is the same word Moses used in verse 3 for God "falling upon" (meeting) them with a sword. In the foremen's eyes, it is no longer Pharaoh who should be judged, but Moses and Aaron.

The foremen admit total defeat. They no longer fear the "sword of God"; they fear the "sword of Pharaoh." The crushing oppression has caused them to fear the master they can see more than the God they cannot.

Even Moses falters under the pressure. He questions the mission, accuses God of bringing "evil" despite Moses' obedience, and claims God hasn't delivered them "at all." In Moses' mind, obedience has led to disaster. However, this is his moment of saving grace. While the foremen cried to Pharaoh for relief, Moses turned to God. Even in his anger and confusion, he turned to the only one who could truly save: Yahweh.

*Why is it important to persist in drawing near to God in the midst of confusion and pain?*

## **Conclusion**

We often seek to sanitize these stories to leave a study with a "warm fuzzy feeling." But this is one of the darkest times in Israel's history. They were promised a God who loved them and was coming to rescue them. They had "rainbows and unicorns" on the horizon.

But God has different methods for growing faith. He used the evil of an oppressive master to crush a fickle, superficial faith. It was a cold, hard reality—full of pain, division, and anger. When the rubber hit the road, the people turned inward to their situation rather than outward to their God. They had forgotten His words, His power, and His Name.

# Getting Your Focus Right

## Exodus 6:1–7:13 | May 31, 2026

What causes you to lose focus? What happens when you do?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Jeremiah 29:1–11;
- 2 Corinthians 4:7–5:10;
- Matthew 11:1–6; 14:22–33;
- 1 Timothy 4:12
- Colossians 3

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“Sin dresses up so that we want it. It promises abundant life. But it is a fraud, for actually it can only give us death. So learn, with each passing year, to hate sin more.” – Christopher Ash

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** God will accomplish his purposes.

**Major Application:** Live by faith, not by sight.

**Key Passage:** *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* (Colossians 3:2 ESV)

### **Live by faith beyond your circumstances.**

At this point, Moses and the people of God find themselves in a pivotal moment. What they see does not appear to match what God has promised, and they are struggling. In many ways, their experience resonates with the experience of the faithful in Christ. For at some point or another, the brokenness of this world confronts us in a way that cannot be ignored, dismissed, or avoided. Perhaps it’s a diagnosis or a failure or a loss of a job or a loss of a loved one—whatever it might be, we are painfully familiar with the feeling.

*Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. (Exodus 6:9 ESV)*

- **Circumstances might tempt you to despair.**

Despair goes beyond sadness—even deep sadness—to feelings of hopelessness. Sometimes it’s like we’re in a boxing match with our circumstances, and they have us in the corner, and we’re too tired to lift our hands to try to even block the blows that keep coming. It’s a brokenness of spirit brought about by the brokenness of sin. This is one of the most grievous effects of sin. Many times, people are genuinely wronged—horribly so—and such injustice breaks their spirit and their faith falters. Other times, people just struggle to make sense of the effects of sin, even when there’s no particular act of sin, such as disasters or disease.

In these moments, we need the comfort provided by God's Word, but it's also in these moments that we struggle to believe. We find ourselves like the father who cried out to Jesus after the anguish of seeing his son suffer for years with no way to help him, saying, "I believe but help my unbelief."

***Why is hopelessness something Christians should not give in to?***

***How do we navigate well seasons of significant heartache?***

*But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?" (Exodus 6:12 ESV)*

- **Limitations might seek to paralyze you.**

Moses had been struggling with his inability to speak well since God first called him to this task. Now, he's spiritualizing his struggle by calling his lips uncircumcised, despite the fact that God has called him to this task. In this, Moses was tempted by his limitations to inaction. God had provided Aaron, and God had made Moses holy. Sure, he wasn't perfect, for as Ecclesiastes said, Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20 ESV) But at this point, Moses was on the precipice of falling into fear's entangling trap.

We often do not step into ministry out of fear brought about by our limitations. Perhaps it's the responsibility that intimidates us. Perhaps it's running away from the giftings given to you by the Lord. Perhaps it's a preoccupation with the approval of man. The enemy does not care how he can paralyze your kingdom ministry; he just cares that he is able to.

***What fears paralyze you, and how do we overcome fear?***

*Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh. (Exodus 7:7 ESV)*

*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12 ESV)*

- **Age might whisper falsehoods.**

Whether you're young or old, your age oftentimes whispers falsehoods to you to convince you that it's not your time to be effective in kingdom ministry. But such whispers are just that: lies. Your age has no bearing on your ability to be faithful, and while your vigor might decrease with age, the vigor of your sins will not wane (Ash). The capacity in which you are to be faithful might vary. It might even have less capacity than what was true in the past or will be true in the future. But that's out of your control. You do not control the capacity with which God has purposed you to have in this season, but you do control the faithfulness you exhibit—or fail to exhibit.

Do not let your age or season of life be an excuse. For Moses, it was old age. He was 80, and his ministry had not even begun! For others, it might be that they don't see how God could use someone as young as them to make a kingdom impact. Others still buy into the lie that their family situation renders them too busy to devote time to kingdom ministry. Consider this progression that the enemy seeks to move people along:

- During one's school and young adult years, they're too young to do kingdom ministry.
- During one's family years, they're too busy with kid stuff to do kingdom ministry.
- During one's empty nester years, they're too busy traveling to do kingdom ministry.
- During one's final decades, they're too old to do kingdom ministry.

When we buy into the enemy's lies, we'll waste our lives, never stepping into the kingdom ministry God calls us to have in our homes, community, and church.

### ***What are some other lies about seasons of life the enemy might use?***

So, to counter such pitfalls, we need to be those who walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7 ESV) If we keep our focus on our limitations rather than God's power, then we will not be effective. For, at the root of someone who lets their circumstances dictate their involvement in kingdom ministry is the false notion that we are actually the ones who secure the results of our ministry. Moses was not the one who delivered the people of God. It's not difficult to imagine many hypothetical "liberators" who might have opposed the most powerful leader in the ancient world to no avail. The power was not Moses, but God, who had promised to deliver his people. Likewise, the power is not you, but God, who works all things according to his will and good pleasure.

So, instead, we need to be those who set our minds on things above in the faith that he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Our circumstances are oftentimes out of our control or ability to change, but that's not what God calls us to do. He calls us to be faithful. He will bring about the results he intends to bring about for the eternal good of his people and his glory being manifest in his creation.

### **The best Satan has to offer pales in comparison to the Almighty.**

One of the biggest misconceptions about the battle between God and Satan is that it's like when Rocky went 12 rounds against Apollo Creed, as if they're two fighters trading blows with equal force, such that it comes down to a decision or both being knocked down with one standing up just before the ten seconds are up. In reality, it's not even a contest. A more apt comparison would be a Mike Tyson 30-second knockout of Marvis Frazier—but even that gives Satan too much credit.

We see this truth depicted in the miracles regarding the staff. God miraculously turned Aaron's staff into a snake. Both the dead tree that was Aaron's staff and the snake serve as reminders of mankind's failure and the curse of sin, but God demonstrates his power in the midst of such brokenness nonetheless. For Pharaoh's priests were able to produce two snakes. We do not need to think that this was fake, for the demons who stood behind their lifeless gods were still able to exercise some power—as they would continue to do in the narrative. However, the power of demons were overcome by the power of God. Both groups cast down their staffs: Aaron his one, and the magicians of Egypt their two, and Aaron's swallowed up the two in victory before returning to Aaron's hand. God had won, but Pharaoh hardened his heart. There was still more glory to be revealed; more power over the false gods of Egypt to be demonstrated.

This would not be the first time God demonstrated his victory over the enemy through his identification with the emblems of mankind's failure. This also illustrates the reality of the incarnation and the suffering of Jesus Christ. *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in that for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We rejoice in this since we, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* (cf. Rom 8:3, 2 Cor 5:21, Col 2:13–15). By identifying with us in our sin, Jesus overcame the dual enemies of Satan and our sin, which results in death. Jesus won the war.

One day, when Jesus returns, and Satan gathers his very best together against Christ, the Great Battle of Armageddon will be over with a word. The reality is that the Great Battle will not really be that much of a battle. By the breath of his mouth, the Lord Jesus will cut down all who oppose him in an instant. It will be over before it even begins. Such is the victory Christ secured for us as foreshadowed in this simple display of God's power through Aaron's staff swallowing up the two serpents produced by demonic power.

Understanding this victory is key to understanding how one can live by faith above their circumstances. For our circumstances might make us feel as if we are losing, but such is not the case. *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* (Colossians 3:3-4 ESV)

# Battle Royale, Part One

## Exodus 7:14–8:19 | June 07, 2026

Who is the most trustworthy person you know and why?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Psalm 96
- Psalm 121
- 1 Timothy 6
- Ecclesiastes 7:14
- Isaiah 31:1

“Therein lies the root of all other forms of idolatry: we deify our own capacities, and thereby make gods of ourselves and our choices and all their implications.” G.K. Beale

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** *For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* (Psalm 96:5 ESV)

**Major Application:** Forsake all idols.

**Key Passage:** <sup>18</sup> *The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast.* <sup>19</sup> *Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.* (Exodus 8:18-19 ESV)

*For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* (Psalm 96:5 ESV)

The plagues display the majesty and glory of God just as much as his deliverance of the Israelites. In fact, God’s judgment against the world and its idolatrous ways and the deliverance of his people of faith go hand in hand. In the great and final Exodus, the marriage supper of the lamb comes with the destruction of Babylon the great and the defeat of Satan’s armies. This pattern of gracious deliverance amid terrifying judgment begins in the plagues.

In each plague, Yahweh demonstrated his power as the one true God over against the demonic gods of the Egyptians. Those who trusted in Yahweh—that is, the Israelites—experienced salvation at his mighty hand; those who trusted in idols experienced the worthlessness of their gods. For in the final culmination of the plagues, God pronounced that *“I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.”* (Exodus 12:12 ESV)

There’s a general structure to the plagues that occur in three cycles of three, plus the final and most severe plague. Each cycle begins with a plague that was prefaced by an early morning warning, concludes with a plague occurring without warning, and progresses to make a specific point.

Cycles 1 & 2 came with a false promise each to let the people go and worship, whereas Cycle 3 contained false promises of release at each plague. In all of them, Pharaoh hardened his heart according to God's sovereign permission, preparing the way for the final and most horrifying plague: the death of the firstborn. In this lesson and the next two, we will examine the plagues, one cycle at a time, drawing out implications for our lives today.

## **Plague One: The Nile turns to blood.**

### ***Overview of Plague***

God prefaced this plague by telling Moses that Pharaoh would not listen to his request because Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Nevertheless, God instructed Moses and Aaron to go to where Pharaoh would be on the Nile early in the morning with his staff. They were to warn Pharaoh that the Nile would be turned to blood, killing the fish and ruining their chief water source—even water that had already been gathered from the Nile into vessels—to the great annoyance of the people. Then, in Pharaoh's sight, Aaron struck the water with his staff, and God's Word came to pass. The magicians were able to repeat this on a smaller scale, and Pharaoh refused to give Moses and Aaron a hearing as he returned to his home, seemingly unmoved by the events that had occurred. The Nile remained in this state for seven days; the people were not killed because they were still able to dig for water, but the point was made, and the effect was felt throughout the nation.

### ***The god in Focus: The Nile***

The god in focus here was the Nile itself. The Egyptians had many gods and saw the divine in all of creation, especially in the Nile, for the Nile was the lifeblood of the Egyptian Empire. Not only did it sustain their life, but it also opened up avenues for commerce, such that they were able to grow into the Superpower of the Ancient World because of the Nile. And the greatest civilization of the ancient world—one of the greatest of human history, lasting unconquered for nearly 3000 years—was brought to its knees in a few days by the power of the Almighty God.

### ***The Point Then and Now***

Egypt perennially tempted the nation of Israel with its promise of military aid to look to political strength for deliverance rather than to Yahweh. For, Isaiah said, *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!* (Isaiah 31:1 ESV)

Today, Christians are tempted to make the same mistake. Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, yet Christians have often struggled with looking to secure their mission through political force rather than gospel faithfulness. We need to be reminded today not to worship at the altar of political power but to put our hand to the plow of making disciples of all nations, knowing that genuine transformation does not work from the outside in but the inside out. The realm of politics is important and Christians ought to labor faithfully in such arenas, but we must not forget that genuine transformation of societies comes through the Spirit transforming individuals and then families through the ministry of the gospel.

## **Plague Two: Overrun by Frogs.**

### ***Overview of Plague***

God again provided a warning to Pharaoh regarding the plague of frogs, in which an unnatural number of frogs would emerge from the Nile, swarming the houses of the Egyptians. Again, God worked through Aaron as he did only in the plagues of this first cycle. The magicians were able to reproduce this on a smaller scale, but it is clear to Pharaoh that his "gods" cannot be the ones responsible. He no longer ignored Moses and Aaron but called them in to plead for respite. Moses allowed him to determine the timing of the respite so that he might know the true power of Yahweh.

### ***The god in focus: Heqet***

Heqet was the frog goddess of fertility. Again, “she” was thought to be responsible for the flooding of the Nile, which led to the fertility of the land and of the women, providing the two key aspects of a thriving empire in the ancient world: a good agrarian economy and children to maintain and expand Egypt’s power.

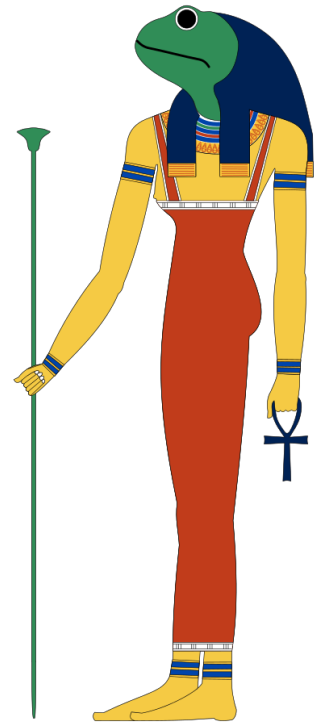
### ***The Point Then and Now***

Condemning a goddess of fertility ought to have sent a message to the Israelites, preparing them for faithfulness in the promised land. However, the idols that most corrupted the people were Baal and Asherah, both of whom were tied to the fertility of land and women. The people should have learned that God would provide for his people, not the pagan fertility gods, but they failed to do so.

Today, economic prosperity continues to be an enticing idol, ensnaring people by means of their greed and love for money. The church has always done well to heed Paul’s warning to Timothy:

*6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6:6-10 ESV)*

And while the reasons those in the ancient world would have idolized giving birth are likely different than today, such is still possible. The point here is not to love children any less. But to love children as much as you possibly can as children. The problem is not that we love our children too much, but that we build our identities around our children and elevate them to a higher order than appropriate. When we do this, we’re no longer loving our children as children, but as gods—a burden they were never meant to carry and a hole in our souls they were never meant to fill.



## **Plague Three: Dust to Gnats**

### ***Overview of Plague***

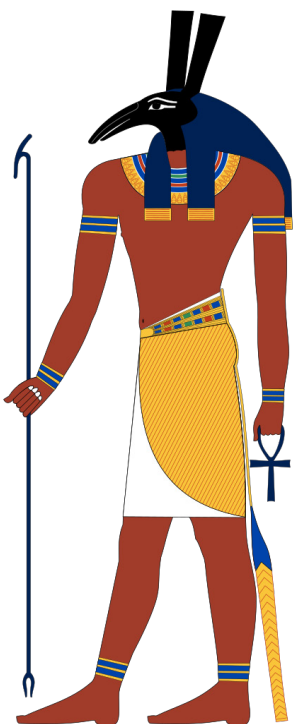
The final plague in this cycle came without warning and again came mediated through Aaron and his staff. After striking the dust of the desert with his staff, it turned into gnats and covered the people and animals in a swarm of annoyance. This miracle, however, could not be replicated by the magicians. Upon seeing their failure, they make the pronouncement and concluding point of the first cycle of plagues:

*Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.”*

Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he refused to submit to the Lord.

### ***The god in focus: Set***

The god in focus here was the desert god Set. Set was a morally ambiguous god. In their chief mythology, Isis and Osiris, he murdered his brother Osiris. He was the god of chaos and disorder, violence and deserts. The Egyptians’ failure to replicate this miracle took away the superstitious response that these plagues might have been the result of Set causing mischief again.



### ***The Point Then and Now***

The point then and today is the same: God is sovereign over all. It's not as if God is in control of only the good things, and the bad things occur outside of his control. God is by no means the author of evil, nor does he actively will sin or evil, but he is sovereign over what he permits to be done by other active agents—such as Satan or sinful human beings. The opening chapter of Job illustrates this point well. God sovereignly sets the limits of what he permits, knowing the wickedness in Satan's hearts, but Satan, and other agents, are the immediate causes of evil.

This teaches us to be grateful in the good days and teachable in the bad ones, for as Solomon said, In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him. (Ecclesiastes 7:14 ESV) And as Paul said, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 ESV)

God has higher purposes in what he permits—even purpose in hardening Pharaoh's heart—that we and even Satan and his demons do not understand. It is as Paul reflected in Romans, “*For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.* (Romans 9:15-18 ESV)

So, for us, we have comfort in the days of chaos, knowing that it's not the result of bad luck, blind fate, or a mischievous god of chaos gaining the upper hand on the good gods for a season. We can rest in the Living God who is in control, working all things together for the good of his saints according to his infinite wisdom, love, and goodwill toward us in Christ.

***Why is it easier for our focus to be captivated by the larger geopolitical and economic issues over which we have very little control rather than the issues over which we do have control?***

***Why is it problematic to build our identities around things in creation?***

***Why is it difficult to trust God's providential wisdom? How ought we to act in light of providence?***

# Battle Royale, Part Two

## Exodus 8:20–9:12 | June 14, 2026

What is the bug that most annoys you?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Matthew 6:19–34;
- Psalm 1;
- Ephesians 2:1–10;
- 2 Peter 2

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“You will find peace only in [Christ] when you despair of yourself and your own works. Besides, you will learn from him that just as he has received you, so he has made your sins his own and has made his righteousness yours.”  
– Martin Luther

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** Only God’s way of religion “works.”

**Major Application:** Put away all forms of man-made efforts in religion.

**Key Passage:** <sup>22</sup> “*But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.*” <sup>23</sup> “*Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.*” (Exodus 8:22-23 ESV)

*Reminder: The plagues displayed the majesty and glory of God just as much as his deliverance of the Israelites. In fact, God’s judgment against the world and their idolatrous ways, and the deliverance of his people of faith go hand in hand.*

In each plague, Yahweh demonstrated his power as the one true God over against the demonic gods of the Egyptians. Those who trusted in Yahweh—that is, the Israelites—experienced salvation at his mighty hand; those who trusted in idols experienced the worthlessness of their gods.

There’s a general structure to the plagues that occur in three cycles of three, plus the final and most severe plague. Each cycle began with a plague that was prefaced by an early morning warning, concluded with a plague occurring without warning, and progressed to make a specific point.

Cycle two’s point, I contend, primarily dealt with the futility of the Egyptian religion compared to the true religion of the Israelites. For these plagues not only continued to cripple Egypt economically, but they also revealed the impotence of the “gods” responsible for safe passage into the afterlife, mediation with the gods, and, perhaps most importantly, the magicians of Pharaoh, who do not appear on the scene again in the narrative after this cycle of plagues concludes.

## Plague Four: Flies

### *Overview of Plague*

This cycle of plagues begins as the previous cycle began, with Moses appearing to Pharaoh early in the morning. However, instead of working through Aaron, Moses confronted Pharaoh directly—as he would in the remaining plagues.

In this plague, flies (most likely from the Delta marshes) swarmed the Egyptians. Here, we first see the distinct experiences between the Egyptians and the Israelites, indicating God’s special favor upon his people. I contend that the first cycle had more of an emphasis on natural tribulation, from which the Israelites seemingly were not spared. However, the second round carried more religious undertones, from which the Israelites were spared. While the people of God share certain trials with the world, they do not share the consequences of false religion. For as God made known:

*“But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.”* (Exodus 8:22-23 ESV)

In response to this plague, Pharaoh offered a compromise; he permitted the people to sacrifice in the land of Egypt. Moses would have no part of such a compromise. He worshiped “as the Lord” would tell him, and he perceived the fundamental differences between the worship of Yahweh and the worship of pagans. They were fundamentally at odds and were abominations in the eyes of the other. There was no room for compromise; to compromise would result in the death of the people at the hands of the Egyptians, which also depicted the spiritual reality that compromise with the world brings about.

Pharaoh temporarily conceded, promising to let the people go, but he did not honor his word when the trial relented.

### *The god in Focus: Wadjet (Most likely)*

Most likely, the goddess in focus is Wadjet, often depicted as a flying serpent. She was associated with the Nile Delta, with its marshes full of insects. She was a protector of the gods and of Pharaoh, associated with the eyes of Ra and of Horus, which were depicted in a particular amulet worn for protection.

### *The Point Then and Now*

Idolatry offered false promises of protection in specific matters that were important to ancient humans. In this plague, God revealed the futility of looking to idols for protection. It was Yahweh who protected his people, not some worthless idol. The Egyptians could maintain their trinkets and icons of various deities all they wanted, but in the end, the flies stopped short of Goshen because God told them to.

Today, we often look to other things for security rather than to the Lord, seeking at times to compromise with the value systems of the world around us. Such cannot be the case for those in Christ. For as Jesus taught: We cannot straddle the fence. Protection is with the Lord; devastation is with the world. We cannot serve two masters, cf. Matthew 6:19-24.



## Plague Five: Livestock

### *Overview of Plague*

In this plague, God struck down the livestock of Egypt. One small textual detail in v. 6 can cause confusion since the word “all” is used to describe the scope. The point is not to say every single livestock was killed, because there were livestock killed in two plagues after this one. Most likely, the “all” refers to the scope of species (Stuart), that is, “every species of Egyptian livestock was affected, but not even one species of the Israelite livestock was touched.”

Pharaoh's hard heart was in disbelief. He could not believe that such an economic blow was not felt by the Israelites, so he sent people to check and see if Moses's prediction came to be—which of course, it did. Not a one of the Israelite livestock was dead.

### ***The god in Focus: Hathor, Hesat, and Apis***

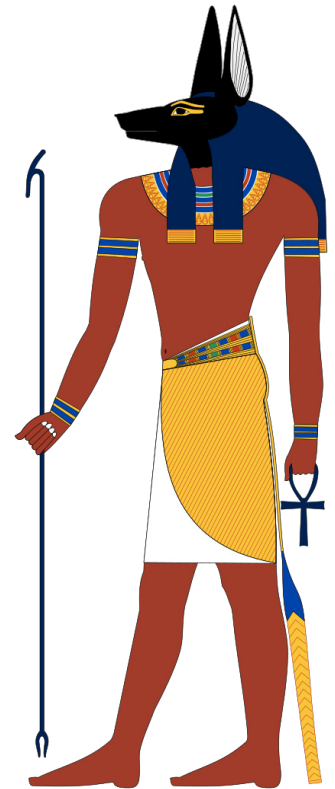
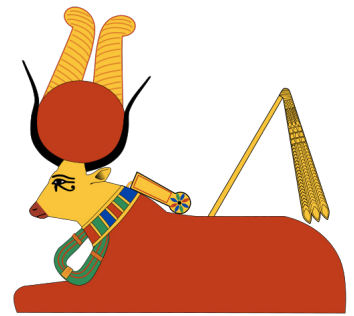
Hathor was a crucial goddess in the Egyptian pantheon. She was the mother of Ra, the chief of the gods, and of Horus, the kingship god. She would often present as a cow, with the cow goddess Hesat being a manifestation of Hathor. Both Hathor and Hesat were associated with providing safe passage in the afterlife, with Hesat also being the mother of Anubis (a popular Egyptian god seen in the Pyramid tombs responsible for bringing one through death to life again).

Apis was the male counterpart to Hesat and part of Ptah, the god who created the other gods and from whom Egypt got its last two letters (egyptianmuseum.org). He featured in the worship of Hathor as a sacrifice, but later was thought to function as a mediator of sorts between the gods and humans.

The destruction of the livestock was certainly an economic blow, but it was also religious. If the gods of the livestock—who were also responsible for saving one from death and mediating between gods and man—were shown to be impotent, it also revealed that the entire Egyptian religious system was empty. It would not protect the Egyptians' souls in death since it could not even protect their livestock.

### ***The Point Then and Now***

Ultimately, mankind, because of sin, has a religious need. Death is a curse from which to be delivered, and we need someone to mediate between the only God and us. Manmade religion will not do the trick. Now, we might not struggle with the idol worship like the Egyptians, but people today certainly struggle with thinking that it is their works that can provide them safe passage in death. But such is not the case. Our works are worthless before the Lord. We need the only mediator there is: Jesus Christ, who merited our full salvation completely, fulfilling all righteousness and paying every penalty.



## **Plague Six: Boils**

### ***Overview of Plague***

The final plague of this cycle occurred without warning, but began in Pharaoh's presence when Moses threw soot into the air. God supernaturally multiplied this soot so that it became fine dust in the air and infected the Egyptians and their animals with painful boils. In this plague, we see the last of the magicians of the false religion of Egypt. They could not even stand before Moses anymore. They had been rendered completely worthless.

### ***The god in Focus: The False Teachers***

I don't think the focus of this plague was to oppose a particular god but their earthly spokesmen, the magicians.

### ***The Point Then and Now***

There have always been and will always be false teachers who seek to use religion—either by twisting Christianity or promoting some other religion—to their own personal ends. Whether these ends are a sense of spiritual pride, lust, power over others, or greed for gain, it does not matter. They traffic in worthless ideas that enslave those who listen to them. False teachers need to be opposed and rejected at every turn. They have no power to deliver on their promises. So, whether they be eastern gurus promoting a new age spirituality or false teachers claiming Christianity, our response ought to be the same: mark and avoid as we help others to do the same.

# Battle Royale, Part Three

## Exodus 9:13–11:10 | June 21, 2026

Why are we afraid of the dark?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Psalm 2
- James 4:1–10
- Deuteronomy 6:1–10
- Colossians 1:9–14
- Revelation 19

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“Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** Those who wage war against God lose.

**Major Application:** Humble yourselves before God.

**Key Passage:** *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. (Psalm 2:1-4 ESV)*

*Reminder: The plagues display the majesty and glory of God just as much as his deliverance of the Israelites. In fact, God’s judgment against the world and their idolatrous ways and the deliverance of his people of faith go hand in hand.*

In this final cycle of plagues, the intensity increased, and the most significant gods of Egypt came into view, with the deified Pharaoh being chief among them. These plagues are the most severe so far and came with the longest introductions, along with some ways of escape for the people.

In this final cycle, Pharaoh is cut at the knees, though he still hardens himself against the Lord. Nevertheless, Yahweh is glorified in all the land and beyond, with his renown going throughout the world.

## **Plagues Seven and Eight: Hail and Locusts**

### **Overview of Plagues**

Again, Moses was instructed to go to Pharaoh in the morning, starting a new cycle of plagues with its own distinctive theme. In this cycle, the conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh came into crystal clarity—and Pharaoh got his hat handed to him. God wanted Pharaoh to know that these plagues were coming on the land on account of one person’s pride and hardness of heart: Pharaoh’s. He had dug his heels into the ground of a losing battle—perhaps a far too familiar experience.

For, from the outset of this cycle, God reveals his purpose when he tells Moses to tell Pharaoh:

*For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. (Exodus 9:14-16 ESV)*

God is, for his glory, being renowned throughout the world on account of his goodness toward his people and his judgment toward the wicked. For while Egypt was the jewel of the ancient world as far as empires go, like so many empires that came after it, it built its power by oppressing others. As people rejoiced at Nineveh's fall and later Babylon's, so too did people likely rejoice at the humbling of Egypt, striking fear in the hearts of people—a fear that would later lead someone like Rahab to leave Jericho behind in favor of the incoming Israelites.

God revealed that he was going to strike the land with deadly hail, but unlike the other plagues, he provided the instructions for the Egyptians to follow if they wanted to avoid some of its consequences. Those who feared the Lord heeded his word and experienced the deliverance of their cattle and slaves, though still losing their crops. Those who did not heed the Lord's warning experienced the fullness of his wrath. However, even in his judgment, God timed this plague so as to not utterly destroy Egypt. He could've waited to take out the wheat as well, but did not. He was merciful still in the midst of judgment.

Pharaoh gave lip service confession of sin. In other words, Pharaoh was more upset about having to deal with the consequences of his actions than he was grieved about the sinfulness of his own heart. It's a worldly grief and a worldly confession that carried no weight before the Lord, for he persisted in his obstinacy.

After the hail, the Lord warned that he was sending locusts to devour what was left. Again, God tied this plague back to the purpose of his goodness toward his people being known, this time to the generations to come in the people of God. And he sent Moses to Pharaoh with the key question of the plague narrative:

*“How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?” (Exodus 10:3 ESV)*

At this point, Pharaoh lost his officials. God had stripped him of the authority and fear he had over others. Such a rebuke in Pharaoh's house would have certainly resulted in death a few weeks prior, but not this day. They turned on Pharaoh and pleaded with him to relent from his fool's crusade and let the people go, insinuating that his pride had ruined the great empire of Egypt. Pharaoh considered it, but when he learnt who would go with the people, he doubled down and drove Moses and Aaron away.

When Pharaoh saw what his foolish acts produced, he went through the same song and dance of worldly grief, faux repentance, and pleading for relief—only to refuse to let the people go. It's a good reminder for us today that the fruit of a repentant heart is not saying the right things but a change of course in one's actions. For when it comes to repentance, actions speak louder than words.

*Why is it easy for us to offer the same lip service as Pharaoh when it comes to repentance?*

### ***The gods in Focus: Osiris and Set***

Osiris and Set were brothers and key deities in the pantheon. Set envied Osiris and murdered him, but through a series of events, Osiris was brought back to life. Both deities were important to the house of Pharaoh. Osiris was the god responsible for agriculture—the economic staple of agrarian societies—and it was Osiris who carried the famous “crook and flail” carried also by Pharaohs as symbols of the coercive authority in the land.



While Set was the god of storms and general chaos, he was also thought to be still on the side of the king, for he was also the patron god of the pharaohs, particularly of Ramses II (one of two key contenders for the particular Pharaoh in view; [egyptianmuseum.org](http://egyptianmuseum.org)).

At any rate, both of these gods had close ties to the authority of Pharaoh.

### ***The Point Then and Now***

Despite how often mankind becomes confused on this point, these plagues reveal that God is God, and we are not. Now, we might not claim divine status as Pharaoh did, but pride is a functional elevation of oneself to divine status over and against the Lord. Pride is the ancient declaration of sin that we know better—when in fact we do not.

All those who refuse the gospel, tragically, go the path of Pharaoh, hardening their hearts against the things of God by God's sovereign permission. However, we, too, resemble Pharaoh's heart in our own sinful expressions of pride, which must be put to death. We must heed James and humble ourselves before the Lord.

***Read James 4:6-10 and then discuss what it means to humble yourselves before God. Why is it difficult?***

## **Plague Nine: Darkness + A Warning**

### ***Overview of Plague***

The third plague in this third cycle of plagues struck the land with a darkness that could be felt, meaning that not only was the sun darkened, but such darkness penetrated into the Egyptians' very souls. Egypt was struck with the darkness of hell for three days.

Pharaoh offered another compromise, which was in turn rejected. Moses was not going to repeat Cain's mistake of offering a bloodless sacrifice. It was better for him to obey God rather than man. This enraged Pharaoh and led him to threaten Moses with murder if he saw him again.

Then, Moses prepared the way for the Exodus, instructing the Egyptians to prepare financial goods to give to the Israelites. God gave Moses favor in their eyes such that they began to do what he said. And then, Moses warned Pharaoh of the death of the firstborn, the final plague. Such a terrible plague would result in the people bowing before the Israelites as they left the land intact. After warning Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron left on their own accord in righteous indignation at the hardness of Pharaoh's heart before the Lord at the cost of so much devastation.

### ***The god in Focus: Ra***

Ra was the sun god and the chief of all the gods. Being as renowned as he was, it was fitting that he was saved for the end of the third cycle. He was the patron god of the sun, heaven, kings, and power. Everything that Egypt was, they were—falsely in their minds—because Ra was on their side. Yet they felt the darkness that such idol worship was preparing for them in those three days. The chief of the Egyptian gods was dead and nowhere to be found. Only the Israelite's God was the Living God.



### ***The Point Then and Now***

There is only one God, and his name is Yahweh, the Triune God revealed in the Scriptures. There is no other. It's a basic point for Christians, but it's the point, nonetheless. In a world full of idols, there is only one true God, cf. Deut 6:4-9. Divine blessing comes from no other source than from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. *May we worship and walk with the one true God all of our days.*

# The Exodus

Exodus 12:1–13:16 | June 28, 2026

Is there something the Lord has done in your life personally that you seek to remember on a regular basis?

**Additional Passages:**

- Lamentations 3:22–26;
- 1 John 4:7–21;
- Revelation 6:12–17;
- 1 Corinthians 11:23–28

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“For my sin was that I sought out pleasures, grandeurs, and truths not in [God] but in his creatures, in myself and in others, and thus fell headlong into sorrows, confusion, and errors.” – Augustine

**H. Highlight a Key Passage**

**E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

**A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

**R. Respond in Prayer**

**T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** God delivers on his promises.

**Major Application:** Let God’s past faithfulness secure you in the present as you face the future.

**Key Passage:** *Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.* (Exodus 12:28 ESV)

*Note: In next week’s lesson, Pastor Randy will give a detailed breakdown of the Passover feast itself and how it beautifully points forward to Christ being the true Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Thus, this week’s lesson will focus more on the larger narrative scope of the Exodus, leaving much of the Passover discussion for next week.*

## Narrative Summary

The final plague Moses threatened was that the firstborn of every household would die. This horrific plague was in judgment of Pharaoh’s hardness of heart and the Egyptians prideful belief that the one who occupied the office of Pharaoh shared in divine status. In Moses’s warning, God did not explicitly state that the Israelites would be delivered but proclaimed that such a curse would be extended even to the children of slaves in the land—which, of course, the Israelites still were.

However, God planned on delivering the Israelites from this plague but not automatically as he had done in other plagues. For, ultimately the same sin hardened heart that resided in Pharaoh resided in the Israelites, meaning they were liable to the same judgment as the Egyptians. Their deliverance would not come on their account but by God’s grace through the genuine faith that gives rise to obedience.

The people were to take a year old lamb without blemish, roast it whole, eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, burning the rest. They were to eat it in “haste,” ready to go, trusting that this night would be the night of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

To be delivered from the plague, they were to take a hyssop branch, dip it in the basin that contained the lamb's blood, and then coat their door posts with that blood. God would see the blood and then "pass over" their homes leaving their firstborn children in safety.

Now, it's important to keep in mind that ultimately, such a salvation was a gift to be received even though it was under the Old Covenant—which is helpful for understanding the nature of the Old Covenant. It's true that they needed to sacrifice a lamb without blemish, put the blood on the doorposts, and eat unleavened bread as part of this process of being delivered. But, the sacrifices themselves were not the grounds for deliverance. God's grace was the grounds for the deliverance which received through the people's faith. The sacrifices in the time of the covenants of promise—which had elements of both grace and works—served a temporary purpose to point toward Christ who established the New Covenant, the covenant of grace.

God did not want the people to forget this miraculous act of deliverance, so he commanded them to observe a seven-day feast of unleavened bread immediately following the feast of Passover. "Thus," as Alec Motyer comments, "remembrance was hammered home, not as a casual, annual raising of the hat to a past truth, but as a serious focusing of life's programme on a foundational event of miraculous proportions and its continuing and contemporary significance."

Upon hearing such instructions from Moses, the text says the people did as the Lord commanded. They believed the Word of the Lord and acted accordingly. Genuine faith always produces obedience.

As the narrative continues, things unfold exactly as the Lord foretold. The Lord passed through the land, striking down the firstborn in his judgment. Not a single household was unaffected, from Pharaoh's to the least—no one escapes the judgment of the Lord. Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron sending word that he is releasing the people as they have requested, and he asks in desperation that they'd also bless him as they go. The Egyptian people were likewise on board with the people leaving, and they had already begun to urge the people to leave in fear of their lives, giving them currency and clothing that would be needed for this fledgling nation just as God has foretold.

God, then, gives further instruction to Moses and Aaron for how this deliverance was to be observed. They were to observe the Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread annually, and they were to consecrate their firstborn to the Lord as a reminder of God delivering them from death.

With this overview in mind, let's settle in on some key points for us today from this narrative.

### **God delivers on his Word; we can trust him.**

One of the key elements of this entire narrative is that God delivers on his promises, for he is the only one who can ensure without fail that every intention of his comes to fruition, exactly as he intends. Not even the most honest among us can guarantee such fulfillments when we assure someone else of some future action. Satan, sin, and idols always over promise and under deliver. God, however, never over promises, never under delivers, never has unforeseen circumstances that cause a change of plans. God delivers on his promises every time.

For us, this means that we can trust his promises today—promises of salvation, of being made holy, of being resurrected in glory, and of possessing abundant joy in living according to his wisdom. Far too often, we falter because we lose trust in God's goodness toward us. We foolishly believe that the fleeting pleasure of sin outweighs the glory offered to us in Christ and in his ways.

### **The power to save is in God, not us.**

Earthly power and wealth did not deliver, for death came to Pharaoh's son just the same. Having a bad draw in life or being oppressed or poor did not put God in debt either, for death also came to the slave's house. Death came to the "good" citizens of Egypt, as well as to those who had given themselves more fully to the passions of the flesh.

The Passover also reminds us that even in God's gracious salvation coming about through grace through faith, the grounds for deliverance is not come based on the intensity of our faith (D.A. Carson). The angel of death passed over the houses of those who trembled that night and those who were confident in the Lord's protection on the basis of the blood of the lamb, not how "great" their faith was.

God's power to save does not find its grounding in us in any way. We do not complete our justification with our faith; God has accomplished everything in Christ. The power of faith rests not in us but in the object of our faith, who is infinite in power. At the end of the day, it was not one's wealth or lack thereof that indicated the favor of God nor their works of morality, but the blood of the lamb.

Thus, when we struggle with doubt and sin, we don't need to hit the panic button as if somehow our faith was not genuine. Such actions would reveal that we are putting our confidence in our emotional states—how we feel about our spiritual walk in a given moment—rather than in the unchanging God. The former leads to a life of anxiety, depression, and fear that the Lord does not intend for his people. The latter leads to a life that rests in the promises and power of God.

### **True Israel consists of those who have faith.**

The Passover would be for those who had joined themselves to Israel only, and it was to be observed by the entire congregation. Slaves could partake once they were circumcised. Gentiles, likewise, could partake provided that they departed from their idolatrous upbringing, and trusted in Yahweh, with the males undergoing circumcision as required in the Old Covenant. In this, Gentiles were not secondhand participants but became, through their faith and submission to God's Word, full participants in God's covenant people and recipients of the same deliverance. Faith, not one's ethnic status, made people covenant people of God.

### **We ought to remember what the Lord has done for us as God has instructed us to do so.**

Alec Motyer asks, that if remembrance was so important to God then, "Should not the birth of Jesus, his death, resurrection, and ascension command a like ordering of our lives, lest these great memorial occasions become to us no more than flashes in the pan?"

Now, I am not highlighting Motyer's quote as a call to "better remember the season" when Christmas and Easter come around. Christmas and Easter—along with other aspects of the "Church calendar"—can be helpful aids in remembering and celebrating the key events and truths of the gospel. If you make use of such rhythms to celebrate what God has done—as we do at MeadowBrook—you ought to do so well, not letting whatever cultural elements you participate in overtake the spiritual elements. However, at the end of the day, those things are not commanded by Scripture, meaning they are not necessary observances commanded by God for us to observe.

This is not to say that God does not want us to remember—quite the opposite, in fact! God desires for his people to regularly remember his gracious salvation each and every Sunday as a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ in the New Testament application of the fourth commandment. We are to not neglect the gathering of the saints on the Lord's Day, celebrating the spiritual and eternal rest secured for us in Christ.

Likewise, God has given us two ordinances—a "washing" and a "feast" to celebrate, depict, and embody the truths of the gospel. Baptism is the initial sign of remembrance we participate in once after having come to faith in the Lord Jesus, as a depiction of our salvation in Christ and in obedience to the Lord's command. Yet, at every baptism, we likewise are encouraged and reminded of what God has done for us in Christ, what he has done for us spiritually, and what he will do for us in the future.

The Lord's Supper is our ongoing sign of covenant belonging. Each time we observe communion, we participate in the body and blood of Christ, symbolized in the bread and fruit of the vine. We eat and drink in remembrance of what Christ has done and in hope of his coming Kingdom in which we dine with him again.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Israelites were to take seriously their regular assemblies in which they remembered what the Lord had done, we likewise must take seriously the regular gathering of the saints on the Lord's Day and the observance of his two ordinances. These things ought not be the things we squeeze into our schedules, rather we need to organize our lives around these matters.

# Jesus is Our Passover

## Matthew 26:17–29 | July 05, 2026

“The mystery, then, of the lamb which God enjoined to be sacrificed as the passover, was a type of Christ; with whose blood, in proportion to their faith in Him, they anoint their houses, i.e., themselves, who believe in Him. . . . And that lamb which was commanded to be wholly roasted was a symbol of the suffering of the cross which Christ would undergo. For the lamb, which is roasted, is roasted and dressed up in the form of the cross.” – Justin Martyr

### H. Highlight a Key Passage

### E. Explain the Passage

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### A. Apply the Passage

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### R. Respond in Prayer

### T. Tell Others about It

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

When Jesus gathered with his disciples in the upper room, he did so for the Passover meal, the most theologically rich and emotionally charged meal in Jewish life. For more than a thousand years, Jewish families had gathered annually to remember how God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt. Passover was not merely a memorial; it was a living rehearsal of redemption.

The meal told a story. Through sights, tastes, questions, and responses, each generation learned who God is, what he has done, and what it means to belong to him. Yet from the beginning, Passover was designed to point beyond itself. It anticipated a greater deliverance, a greater Lamb, and a greater redemption.

In Matthew 26, Jesus takes this familiar meal and reveals its ultimate meaning. He shows that Passover finds its fulfillment in him. What Israel remembered symbolically, Jesus would accomplish decisively. As instructed by God through Moses in Exodus 12:8, the meal consists of three elements:

#### 1. **The lamb** – A male without blemish.

During the initial Passover, by faith, Israelites applied the lamb’s blood to their home’s doorway according to the instructions of God, and they roasted the meat by fire and ate it.

When Peter and John prepared for the final Passover, they killed the lamb and skewered it. Commonly, a spear of pomegranate wood was thrust through the lamb horizontally, and another pressed through it vertically, impaling it much like a cross, so they could roast it easily with fire. The allusions to Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, are remarkable.

#### 2. **Bitter herbs** – Symbolized the bitterness of slavery.

Rabbinical teaching speaks of dipping three times: 1) green bitter herb in salt water, recalling Israel’s outcry and tears before the Lord; 2) Matzah (unleavened bread) is dipped in a blend of horseradish, which would bring tears to their eyes, reminding them of the bitter tears of the children of Israel while in captivity. 3) Herbs or matzah dipped in charoset, a sweet, dark-colored mixture of finely chopped fruits and nuts. According to the Talmud, its color and texture are meant to recall mortar, which the Israelites used during their enslavement in Ancient Egypt.) As Jesus dipped his bread, he revealed the betrayer, Judas.

1. Matzah – One of the main parts of the meal is the matzah, unleavened bread.

Throughout the Bible, leaven (yeast) most often symbolizes sin. The unleavened bread of the Passover meal symbolizes the body of Jesus, who is the perfect, sinless offering. Later in the Passover meal, Jesus would say to His disciples, “This is my body...”

During the Passover meal, the Ma Nishtanah introduces four questions that guide the evening. While each question is unique, they all answer one central question: “What makes this night different from all other nights?” These questions are usually asked by the youngest person at the table who is capable.

The questions include:

- On other nights, we each have different kinds of bread, but why on this night do we only eat matzah?
- We usually eat different kinds of vegetables, but why do we only eat what is bitter on this night?
- Why, on this night, do we dip twice?
- Why, on this night, do we all recline at the table?

The answers come as the father retells the Passover narrative.

- We eat unleavened bread because our ancestors had to flee Egypt in haste and could not wait for their bread to rise.
- Bitter herbs remind us of the bitterness and tears of slavery.
- We dip twice—first into salt water to remember our tears, and then into charoset, recalling both the hardship of slavery and the mercy of God who sweetened our burden.
- We recline while eating to celebrate our freedom, since in the ancient world slaves stood to eat, but free people reclined.

Traditionally, the Passover meal is divided into four sections, each with a separate time to drink from the cup of wine. In other words, each drink signaled a division.

The original instructions recorded in the Bible concerning the Passover meal do not mention the wine, and the origins of its inclusion in the Passover feast is unknown. However, the Mishnah (writings of Jewish oral rabbinical teachings) instructs those celebrating the meal to drink from the cup four times during the Passover Seder (Pesachim 10:1). I am pretty confident that Jesus followed tradition, since the New Testament mentions two cups Jesus drank at the Last Supper.

Each part reveals the fulfillment of God’s promises of redemption, recorded in Exodus 6.

*Say therefore to the people 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 slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’ (Exodus 6:6-7 ESV)*

### **THE CUP OF SANCTIFICATION (first cup)**

During this part of the Passover meal, the father recounts the ten plagues God brought upon Egypt as acts of judgment (Exodus 7–12). The final and most severe plague was the death of the firstborn. Yet even in judgment, God made a way of mercy. He instructed his people to act in faith by sacrificing a spotless lamb and applying its blood to the lintel and doorposts of their homes.

When God saw the blood, he spared every household marked by it. The angel sent to execute judgment passed over those homes, demonstrating that salvation came through faith in God’s provision, not through merit or strength.

This moment in the Passover points directly to Jesus. In the same way, when we trust in Christ and apply his blood to our lives by faith, judgment passes over us. Through him, we are set apart, spared from death, and brought into God’s saving mercy.

**The Washing of the Hands** – The second ceremony of the Passover Seder is the washing of hands. At this moment, one family member pours water from a pitcher into a bowl and provides a towel so that each person may ceremonially wash their hands. This act symbolizes purification and preparation, an outward reminder of the need for inward cleansing.

It was likely during this portion of the meal that Jesus transformed the familiar ritual into a powerful object lesson. Rising from the table, he laid aside his outer garment, wrapped a towel around himself, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:4–5). By doing so, Jesus revealed himself as a servant leader, the only one who could provide true spiritual cleansing. And his actions also posed a clear challenge to his followers, too.

Afterward, Jesus explained the meaning of what he had done: *“When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, ‘Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.’”* (John 13:12–15 ESV)

Jesus makes it clear that humility and service are not optional for his followers. Earlier, the disciples had argued among themselves about who was the greatest. Jesus corrected their thinking by redefining greatness, not as self-exaltation, but as self-giving love expressed through humble service.

True love is demonstrated through attitudes and actions, not merely spoken words. Followers of Jesus are called to serve one another more than they desire to be served, to give more than they receive, and to view the church not as a place to consume but as a body in which to contribute. As Scripture reminds us: *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace* (1 Peter 4:10 ESV).

### **THE CUP OF DELIVERANCE (second cup)**

During the meal’s main course, the family and friends recount God’s rescue of his people. And, after dinner, something extraordinary takes place.

During the Passover meal, the middle piece of matzah from the Matzah Tosh (a simple cloth or pouch with three sections, each holding a piece of matzah) is removed and broken. One portion is wrapped in cloth and hidden away. This piece is called the afikomen, a word that means “that which comes later” or “what comes after.” After the meal, the afikomen is brought back, broken again, and shared with everyone at the table, serving as the final taste of the Passover.

Traditionally, the hiding and finding of the afikomen helps keep children engaged in the story and marks an important transition in the meal. Yet for Christians, this moment carries profound significance. The broken matzah, wrapped and hidden, points forward to Jesus—his body broken, wrapped in linen, laid in a tomb, and later revealed again in resurrection life.

When Jesus took the bread and said, “This is my body,” he was not inventing new imagery, but revealing the deeper meaning of what Passover had long anticipated. Just as the afikomen is shared by all at the table, Christ gives himself to all who believe, becoming the bread of life through his death and resurrection.

Jesus explained to his disciples that he would be the one broken, pierced, and marked. His body would be wrapped in linen and hidden away in a tomb. He would rise again on the third day and be found by all who seek him as he had told them before.

Jesus is the bread of life. He brings forth life, but He does this through His death and resurrection. John records more of Jesus’ Last Supper teaching: Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24 ESV)

Even holding the bread reminds us of his death.

- It has the marks of stripes – *...By His stripes we are healed.* (Isaiah 53:5)
- It is pierced – *They will look on Me who they pierced....* (Zechariah 12:10) *They pierced my hands and my feet.* (Psalm 22:16)

## **THE CUP OF REDEMPTION (third cup)**

Each of the four cups in the Passover meal corresponds to a promise God made to Israel in Exodus 6:6–7. The third promise is this: “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.” This promise lies at the very heart of the Passover story.

In the Passover meal, the third cup is known as the cup of redemption. It celebrates God’s act of rescuing his people from bondage at great cost. When we come to the Lord’s Supper, we hold the fulfillment of that promise in our hands. Through the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross, we are rescued from the bondage of sin and death and freed from the judgment our sin deserves.

Jesus is our Redeemer. On the cross, he paid the penalty required by God’s law. As Scripture declares: The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

During the meal, Jesus took this third cup and explained its full meaning. He explained that his sacrifice would accomplish the redemption that Passover had always anticipated.

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matthew 26:26–29 ESV)

When we take the cup during Communion, we are reminded that we stand in a new covenant established by God for our salvation. In the ancient world, covenants were sometimes sealed by sharing a cup of wine. This was especially true in Jewish marriage customs.

In a marriage proposal, the groom and his family presented a covenant agreement and the bride price to the bride’s family. The groom then offered a cup of wine. If the bride’s father accepted the cup and drank from it, the covenant was sealed, and the couple was betrothed. The groom would then depart, promising to prepare a place for his bride and return for her when it was ready.

This imagery sheds light on the meaning of the third cup. As Jesus offered the cup to his disciples, he was declaring God’s new covenant of redemption. The Lord offered his own life and blood as the bride price, securing a holy and eternal relationship with his people.

Jesus also gave a promise that extends beyond the meal: I go and prepare a place for you, and I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (John 14:3). Until that day, we live as a redeemed people with the covenant secured by Christ, awaiting his promised return.

## **THE CUP OF ACCEPTANCE**

The final cup of the Passover meal is often associated with completion and joy. Yet during the Last Supper, Jesus deliberately refrained from drinking this cup. He told his disciples that he would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day he drinks it new with them in his Father’s kingdom.

By withholding from this cup, Jesus signaled that the story of redemption was not yet finished. While his sacrificial work on the cross would soon be complete, the full acceptance and celebration of his kingdom awaited a future day. Jesus knew that the hour of his acceptance by his own people had not yet come, and therefore the joy associated with this final cup remained deferred.

The fourth cup points forward to the promised fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan. It anticipates the day when Christ’s reign will be openly acknowledged, when faith will give way to sight, and when redemption will be celebrated without opposition or sorrow. Until that day, the church lives between the cross and the kingdom. We are redeemed, but still waiting.

The cup of acceptance reminds us that our hope is not only rooted in what Christ has already accomplished, but also in what he has promised to complete. One day, Jesus will drink this cup with his redeemed people, and the joy of salvation will be fully and finally realized.

Until that day, may we be faithful, eagerly anticipating his return, and sharing his message of redemption to the lost world.

# Following the LORD

## Exodus 13:17–22 | July 12, 2026

What does it mean to follow someone? Has there ever been a time where you followed the wrong person? How was that experience different from when you followed the right person?

### **Additional Passages:**

- Psalm 23;
- John 10;
- Ruth 1;
- Psalm 103;
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- See Lesson

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What's going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** The LORD never ceases to lead his people; he is always with us.

**Major Application:** Follow the LORD, equipped for battle.

**Key Passage:** *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.* (Exodus 13:21-22 ESV)

<sup>1</sup> *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* (Psalm 23:1-4 ESV)

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* (John 10:27 ESV)

<sup>16</sup> *But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."* (Ruth 1:16-17 ESV)

Following the Lord is an essential part of being a disciple of Christ. In fact, to be a disciple entails being both a learner and follower of someone. As the good shepherd who laid his life down for his sheep that they might have eternal life, Jesus is the one we follow. We are his disciples. We learn from his wisdom, recorded in the entirety of the Scriptures—the red and black letters—and we pattern our lives after his way of life. In short, we imitate of Christ. Thus, we go by the moniker of Christian, i.e. little Christs.

However, we might ask ourselves: what does it look like to follow the Lord in the day to day? This is one of the reasons I love the Old Testament narratives. For, not only do they reveal a rich history of how God has worked among his people and how that history points forward to its focal point: Jesus Christ; but they also reveal to us practical ways to live by faith in the lives of people just like us—with all our shortcomings. At the end of the day, despite the many miraculous events of the Exodus narrative, we see a people struggling to overcome their own doubts and fears with faith in the Lord who has saved them and is leading them. In other words, we see people just like us.

This is why Paul wrote of this very generation, saying, “*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*” (1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV) We can learn from their successes, and we can learn from their failures as we seek to live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

So, with this in mind, let’s examine Exodus 13:17–22, a smaller section of Scripture than we’ve been covering. (Sometimes it’s good to cover large sections at one time, and other times, it’s good to meditate deeply on the truths of just a few verses; today’s lesson will be an exercise of the latter approach).

### **God knows what his people can handle, and he is patient toward them.**

*<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. <sup>14</sup> For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.* (Psalm 103:11-14 ESV)

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* (1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV)

God was patient with his people he had just delivered from Egypt. He knew the frailty of their faith—nothing surprises the God infinite in knowledge and wisdom. He knew they were not ready for open war against the Canaanites. They needed time under his instruction and provision in the wilderness. He would lead them to a place of readiness—despite the people’s initial faithlessness, save Caleb and Joshua—but that day was not this day. They had more to learn.

Far too often, we forget that the God who has saved us somehow becomes disappointed in us when we struggle, and even loves us less. Listen, such things are not true. Our God is infinite in his love for his people and he does not—indeed cannot—change! God knows we are weak, but he supplies us with the grace and power needed by his own Spirit to follow us. He does not allow us to be tempted in such a way that it is impossible for us to follow him, but he provides the way of escape and the will to do so by his indwelling Spirit. Now, we must choose to take such a path by faith, but the point remains: God knows what you can handle by his strength, and he is leading you away from sin into his righteousness.

We struggle with sin in this body of death, but do not let your struggles define you. You are defined by the new nature we have in Christ, and in him, there is no condemnation.

### **This does not mean that following the LORD is easy.**

*<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, <sup>6</sup> being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.* (2 Corinthians 10:3-6 ESV)

Just because God knew that the people were not ready for open war against the Canaanites did not mean the path ahead of them was easy. It was not. In fact, the Lord led them, equipped for battle, into the arid wilderness to a seeming dead end, where Pharaoh’s army would have them trapped. The LORD knew what his people could handle, yes. However, he also knew that he would require hard things of them, to be tackled not according to the power of the flesh but according to the divine power that can only be appropriated through faith.

Today, it's the same way. When we are saved, we are not immediately transported to heaven. We are elect, chosen by God, but we are also exiles, tasked to be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves among wolves in a wilderness that is not our home. In other words, we are still in our wilderness journey with the promised land laying beyond the horizon. As he did then, so the Lord does today. He expects his people to do the hard work of growing in Christlikeness by his power, equipped for battle.

This is why Paul wrote that we ought to:

*10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.* (Ephesians 6:10-13 ESV)

We equip ourselves not with our strength, but with the truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, and salvation provided for us in Christ as we engage the Scriptures and pray according to the Spirit's will revealed in the Scriptures. It is not always easy, but it's always worth it.

### **As you follow the Lord, hold near to your heart the hope foretold by the prophets.**

*<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions."* (Genesis 15:13-14 ESV)

*By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.* (Hebrews 11:22 ESV)

Moses taking the bones of Joseph was an act of biblical hope. Remember, hope in the Scriptures is not a mere wish, but a confident expectation that what has been foretold will be fulfilled. Joseph wanted his body buried in the promised land—which knowing the prophecy given to Abraham—he knew would come about in time, and Moses believed that same promise.

As we follow the Lord, we need to hold near to our hearts the same hope for the future. Yes, times may be difficult in this life. We experience temptation, failure, suffering, heartache, and death—but, all of the brokenness has an expiration date. Christ is the victor, and he will bring us home. Such a hope sustains God's people of faith in the hard days of life, such a hope helps God's people choose the lasting joy of righteousness over the fleeting pleasure of sin, and such a hope empowers us to face life's final battle with confidence, knowing that in Christ we are already victorious over death.

### **The Lord is with you always.**

*It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.* (Deuteronomy 31:8 ESV)

*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:20 ESV)

The LORD's presence was with the people. The Angel of the LORD—that is the pre-incarnate Christ—was within the pillar of smoke and fire, which signified the Spirit's presence as well (Exo. 14:19). The Triune God was with his people then, and he is with us today in even greater measure. We can be confident in this truth as we follow after the Lord. Our God will not leave or forsake us, so we have no need to fear or be dismayed at what might come our way. Our God is sovereign over all—the good days and the bad. We can trust that his presence with us is enough to sustain us, and that he is working all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

# Red Sea Road

## Exodus 14:1–31 | July 19, 2026

Has there ever been a situation when you did not see any way forward but the Lord provided one anyway?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Exodus 15:13-14
- Psalm 105:23-25
- Romans 9:17-18
- 1 Peter 4:12-13
- Mark 9:14–29
- Matthew 17:20

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“We’ll never walk alone down a red sea road.” – Ellie Holcomb

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** The Lord fights for his people.

**Major Application:** Walk in the fear of God, not the world.

**Key Passage:** *And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”* (Exodus 14:13-14 ESV)

The people followed the Lord and his servant Moses into the wilderness, and now their faith would be tested. They would falter, but the Lord would save his people for his glory, using Moses to encourage them to faithfulness in the face of fear and doubt. This narrative is well-known, but there are significant lessons that encourage us today as we grow in our pursuit of the Lord.

### **The world will always be opposed to the Lord and his people.**

*Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:20 ESV)*

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33 ESV)*

While it might be mind-boggling to us to see Pharaoh persist in his opposition to the Lord, it really ought not surprise us. While many pictures of Christ exist in the Old Testament, there are also a handful of pictures of Satan. Pharaoh certainly qualifies as one of those. Like Satan, he opposes the Lord in his arrogance, foolishly believing victory to be a possibility only to lead his followers to get routed by the judgment of the Lord.

For, as Satan worked in Pharaoh to no avail, he also worked in Judas, Pilate, and the religious leaders to no avail, and he will also work in all those who oppose the Lord, to no avail.

As John foretold,

*<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup> and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup> And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, <sup>10</sup> and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10 ESV)*

Thus, in Exodus 14, Pharaoh did what the world always does: he hardened himself against the Lord and then lost.

In our current moment, we should not be surprised at the vitriol with which God and Christ and his people are treated. We should not be surprised to be maligned, ostracized, passed over, or opposed. However, we need not stumble in fear, for we know that victory belongs to the Lord, and we can be confident that in the end, the Lord will vindicate his people. Our expectation should be opposition, but we can take heart for our Lord has overcome.

***What are ways the world opposes the people of God today?***

### **Lift your eyes above your circumstances.**

Hardened in their sin, Pharaoh and the Egyptians see the Israelites cornered in the wilderness and believe that this is their shot to regain those who were once their slaves. How in the world they could think such things is beyond me, but such is the deceptive influence of sin. Vice turns the wisest into fools. Those who heed Lady Folly's seductive voice over Wisdom's call become fools themselves. In their foolish pride, it says they pursue the Israelites.

Now we know the Egyptians were foolish because we know the end of the story. The people should have known based on the past works of God that the Egyptians were foolish to pursue them; but like so many, we far too often let the trials of the present drive from our memories God's faithfulness in the past and his promises for the future. Listen to what Moses reported about the people:

*<sup>10</sup> When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." (Exodus 14:10-12 ESV)*

Now, compare their attitude to that of the psalmist, who wrote:

*<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. <sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. <sup>5</sup> The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. (Psalm 121:1-5 ESV)*

It's easy to cast stones at the doubt of the people, but we often find ourselves in similar spots. Rather than lifting our eyes to the Lord from whom comes our help, we don't lift our eyes high enough and we fixate on our circumstances—and we falter in our fear and doubt. However, the Lord desires better for us. He does not want us to fear, but to be resolute in the face of adversity. Indeed, he wants us to rejoice in every trial, knowing that through the trial God is sanctifying us and preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (See 2 Cor 4:7–18). We must lift our eyes above our circumstances to the Lord who is our ever-present help in our hour of need.

In short, we need to listen to Moses's encouragement to stand firm and simply behold the salvation of the Lord as we quiet the worries of our feeble hearts. And you know the story. God worked through Moses to miraculously part the Red Sea so that all of Israel would pass safely through the waters on dry land, destroying all of their enemies in the process. The Lord protected them from destruction and saw them through to the end. We ought to be confident that God—in the scope of eternity—will do the same for us

### **With one's salvation, comes a cleansing of the old ways so that they could walk in the new.**

Paul likens the crossing of the Red Sea to one's baptism (1 Cor 10:1–4), which makes sense. The Lord had provided their substitute for their judgment in Passover and led them out of the land of slavery, corresponding to the work Christ did for us and our salvation received through faith. But God was not just saving them from Egypt, he was establishing them as his new people. The crossing of the Red Sea was a baptism of sorts that symbolized the washing away of their old ways of Egypt that they might walk in the pure ways of God's wisdom.

For, on the other side, the text says *Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.* (Exodus 14:31 ESV) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and God would spend the rest of the Exodus narrative through Deuteronomy showing them what their new life with him would look like.

And, in our baptism we depict the spiritual truths of our salvation. We have been set free from Satan's tyranny, and we have died with Christ. We are buried with him in baptism, and we are symbolically raised to walk with him in the newness of life. Our baptism teaches us that we cannot keep living as we did in the land of our slavery. We've been cleansed from that way of life, and something new and far greater awaits us.

### **Leadership Snapshot: Moses**

In this chapter, we see Moses lead the people well in a place of panic. Those who have been entrusted with the task of leading—which is every husband and every parent—can glean some leadership lessons from Moses.

- **Moses was not reactionary.**

The people reacted in panic; Moses led in confidence. Good leadership is not reactionary. Reactionary leadership is leadership according to the passions of the flesh. Wise leadership does not react in the flesh but responds in the Spirit and in wisdom, moderating one's emotions appropriately as fitting for the circumstance.

- **Moses calmed those around him with the truth.**

Moses did not seek to calm the people with anything except what he knew to be the truth. What he gave the people was not his opinion or some empty platitude, but what God had revealed to him. For at the end of the day, the people needed God's wisdom not Moses's.

- **Moses sought the Lord in prayer.**

Moses's confidence in the Lord's salvation did not stop him from praying for it! In fact, we are to pray for what we know to be God's will; it's part of our exercise of faith. Moses knew salvation would come, but did not know exactly how, so he sought the Lord fervently in prayer by crying out to him. Good leaders exercise their best leadership on their face before God in prayer.

- **Moses acted in obedience.**

The time came to act. Prayer is essential, but God calls us to act as well. The time came for Moses to get up and lead the people forward in the way God had directed him to do so. Leaders likewise need to act in obedience, leading the people entrusted to them forward in the wisdom of God.

# The Heart of Worship

## Exodus 15:1–21 | July 26, 2026

What is a good definition of Worship?  
And why is singing an important—but not exclusive—component of worship?

### *Additional Passages:*

- Psalms 29, 90;
- John 4:21–24;
- Colossians 3:16;
- Revelation 15:1–8
- See Lesson

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“I’m comin’ back to the heart of worship // And it’s all about You // It’s all about You, Jesus” – Matt Redman

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What’s going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** Worship is the natural response of those who have experienced the Lord’s salvation.

**Major Application:** Worship.

**Key Passage:** *The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.*

(Exodus 15:2 ESV)

Exodus, in many ways, is the story of Israel’s corporate salvation and official establishment as the people of God as was promised before to Abraham. It precedes the official giving of the Mosaic Law and establishment of the tabernacle. Immediately, it’s an event recognized for its salvific import. Throughout the Scriptures, God would use the Exodus narrative to frame his relationship to his people as that of Savior. For on the banks of the Jordan before entering the promised Land, Moses reminded the second generation that:

*The LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.* (Deuteronomy 4:20 ESV)

And as Michael Morales noted, “Israel’s historical exodus out of Egypt forms a scriptural paradigm for God’s salvation, with the Prophets prophesying a second exodus out of exile for Israel and the nations, accomplished by the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the new exodus proclaimed in the New Testament.”

Thus, it is proper that in Chapter 15, once the salvation is secured and the people had safely crossed the Red Sea, that worship was the result. This is a pattern that continues throughout the Scriptures. God’s people experience his salvation, so in turn they worship. The Church continues to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs today, and all those who reject the wisdom of the world in these last days, refusing to be marked with the character of those who oppose God, will join together to sing the song of Moses.

For as John made known,<sup>3</sup> *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"*<sup>4</sup> *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*" (Revelation 15:3-4 ESV)

Worship, in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in Heaven is simply part of the DNA of God's people, the most fitting response to God's work of salvation in our lives.

In Chapter 15, we see an instance of Old Testament corporate worship that retraces many of the same events we've been discussing the past several weeks. This week's lesson will not focus as much on those historical details such as:

- The Lord overcoming the armies of Pharaoh by bringing the Red Sea down upon them.
- The judgment on the idols of Egypt in the plagues.
- The rescue of the people of God who were led personally by God himself through the wilderness.

These details are of the utmost importance for their worship was grounded in a historical salvation, not a theoretical one. Having covered these details, however, this lesson will primarily focus on the principles of worship that can be gleaned from first instance of corporate worship in the Bible.

### **Worship is primarily God-focused.**

"Worship is primarily God-focused" is the overarching theme that jumps out to me from Exodus 15. It's not that there's no reflection on the personal impact or the effect of salvation in the people of God. Those things are there and are good, but they are not primary.

There's a place for the pronoun "I" in the songs we sing; it's a beautiful thing to commit oneself to the Lord. But the pronoun "you" with the Triune God as the referent ought to occupy our main attention, and he ought to occupy it properly. We are serving the omnipotent God who overcomes all who oppose him. Reverence and awe ought to always be paired with our celebration of our salvation and the friendship we have with God. It's not an "either/or", but a "both/and."

With this in mind, I think six points about worship can be derived from this passage that can aid us in worshipping God well.

#### ***Worship celebrates who God is.***

First, worship celebrates who God is, not just what he has done for us. We rejoice in the attributes of God, for they provide the reliable foundation for what God does in history. To put it another way, the doctrines signified by God's name revealed to Moses in the burning bush in chapter 3, are revealed in his actions in chapters 4–14.

As the unchanging God who is infinite in his perfections and is faithful to his promises, he himself is our strength. He is the substance of our song, such that without him simply being who he is there would be no reason for singing. He himself is our salvation. He is my God, and the God of all those who have come before me in the faith. Therefore, we praise and exalt him, for he is a man of war who fought for his people, living up to the name YHWH.

Now, by identifying himself as a man of war, God is not trying to put himself and the man of war in the same category of being, like in the way wolves and coyotes belong to the same genus. Rather, God is communicating something about his nature by means of an analogy of proportion, such that:

Might : Man of War :: Might : YHWH

There's a similarity there, and because of that similarity something can be truly known of God via human language. However, the dissimilarity between the mighty man of war and the infinite God who is himself the Almighty—the essential subsistence of Strength itself—far outweighs the similarity in a manner that we cannot yet comprehend.

Thus, oftentimes, worship will use figurative language to communicate beautiful truths about who God is that human language simply cannot comprehend—and what a glorious reality that even the finest of speech cannot capture all the greatness and goodness of our God.

***Worship celebrates what God has done.***

In addition to celebrating who God is, we celebrate what he has done. It is good and right to regularly rehearse the truths of the gospel narrative in our songs. We should never tire of singing of the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, or the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. We should not tire of singing praise to God for the personal deliverance he has brought about.

*Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) / that saved a wretch like me! / I once was lost, but now am found, / was blind, but now I see.*

***Worship celebrates what God is doing.***

Worship does not need to be only in the past tense, but in the present tense as well. While we might not sing about the trembling of the Edomites and the terror that has befallen upon the inhabitants of Canaan, we ought to reflect in our song the work God is currently doing in our lives in our battle against sin. Consider these songs:

*Holy words long preserved / for our walk in this world, / They resound with God's own heart / Oh, let the Ancient words impart. // Words of Life, words of Hope / Give us strength, help us cope / In this world, where e'er we roam / Ancient words will guide us Home. // Ancient words ever true / Changing me, and changing you. / We have come with open hearts / Oh let the ancient words impart.*

And,

*No guilt in life, no fear in death; / this is the pow'r of Christ in me. / From life's first cry to final breath, / Jesus commands my destiny. / No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man / can ever pluck me from His hand; / 'til He returns or calls me home, / here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand!*

It's good to recollect in our singing God's present work, because it's good to celebrate the beauty of life with Christ and the beauty of holiness. For God has saved us not only from the penalty of sin but he is also saving us from the practice of sin in the sanctifying work he is bringing about by the Spirit. He is giving us victory today, not over a specific people, but over Satan and the strongholds of sin that still reside in our flesh—and we should celebrate.

***Worship celebrates what God will do.***

Moses was already looking forward to God planting his people on his holy mountain, that is Jerusalem in the promised land. Likewise, Heaven should occupy our focus in our worship, for Heaven is one of the greatest encouragements for those in the trials of this life.

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, / till my trophies at last I lay down; / I will cling to the old rugged cross, / and exchange it some day for a crown.*

***Worship celebrates the authority of God.***

Worship likewise ought to be an act of submission unto the authority of God, for it is he—no one else—who reigns forever and ever. So, as the hymn goes:

*Wherever He leads, I'll go / Wherever He leads, I'll go / I'll follow my Christ who loves me so / Wherever He leads, I'll go // He drew me closer to His side / I sought His will to know / And in that will, I now abide / Wherever He leads, I'll go*

***It is good to worship God with music.***

Lastly, Miriam led the ladies in response to praise the Lord with both their voices and with instruments, specifically tambourines. I love the amount of people who lead the people of God at MeadowBrook in worship with their voices and with instruments. If God has blessed you with talent in that area and you have a desire to lead out in worship, email [kevin@mbchurch.com](mailto:kevin@mbchurch.com) today to get plugged into our worship ministry.

# Bitter to Sweet

## Exodus 15:22–27 | August 02, 2026

What's the worst thing you've ever tasted?

### *Additional Passages:*

- 1 Peter 2:20–24
- Galatians 3:13–14
- James 1:2–4
- 2 Corinthians 4:16–18
- Romans 5:1–6, 8:28

“I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.”— Charles Spurgeon

### **H. Highlight a Key Passage**

### **E. Explain the Passage**

- What's going on in the text?
- How does it relate to Christ and his gospel?
- How does it instruct me to live?
- How does it stir me to hope?

### **A. Apply the Passage**

- What specific situations does this text apply to in my life?

### **R. Respond in Prayer**

### **T. Tell Others about It**

- Who needs to be encouraged with these truths this week?

**Big Truth:** The cross transforms the bitterness we experience along the way into something sweet.

**Major Application:** Don't let the trial overwhelm you that you depart from the one who is your healer.

**Key Passage:** *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* (1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV)

The Old Testament institutions and rituals along with the various offices and heroes functioned as shadows that pointed forward to Christ and his kingdom, cf. Col 2:17. In this way, the New Testament and the illumination of the Spirit shines the light on Christ and his work such that the outlines of the shadow can be clearly perceived today in ways that they could not be then. The veil has been removed, for as Paul wrote,

*<sup>14</sup> But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they [adherents to Judaism] read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* (2 Corinthians 3:14–18 ESV)

And as Jesus succinctly put it: *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me* (John 5:39 ESV). Our passage today is no different. So, in today's lesson, we will examine the passage in the following manner. First, I will summarize the narrative, communicating the point it served to the Israelites in that generation. Next, I will communicate how the text points forward to Christ and his work. Finally, I'll consider how the passage stirs us to embrace the virtuous life of faith in the steadfast hope we have in Christ.

## **Narrative Summary: The Lord is faithful to an unfaithful people.**

After crossing safely through the Red Sea and worshipping the Lord in the splendor of his holiness, the people still find themselves in the wilderness. In other words, they were not immediately transported to the promised land but had the hard road of the wilderness ahead of them.

They go for three days without water. Generally speaking, three to five days is how long the average human can survive without water. So, pending on how much water they had carried with them, they were fast approaching a critical point.

Then, they find water, seemingly arriving at a place that would provide relief. But it does not. The water was bitter, so they named the place Marah, the Hebrew Word for bitter (Remember, Naomi changing her name). Maybe the water made them sick, maybe it was full of salt; whatever the case, what they thought was their lifeline proved not to be.

Rather than seek the Lord in faith, they grumbled against Moses. Moses did not react in the anger of his flesh but sought the Lord on their behalf. The Lord instructs Moses to take a tree and throw it into the water. By means of the tree, the Lord miraculously turned that which was bitter and led to death into that which was sweet and sustained their life. The Lord was testing their faith. He wanted to communicate that if they, as a nation, followed him, then he would provide for them as their healer and not put the plagues he put on Egypt onto them.

Then, as a foreshadowing of what the Lord was offering to them, he brings them into an oasis, named Elim after the palm trees that were there. The number of springs and palm trees were not coincidental, but providential. They corresponded to the twelve tribes of Israel and the seventy members of Jacob's household that came with him when they went to Egypt to be saved from the famine by the hands of Joseph.

The point being that if Israel, as a corporate Adam, would keep his covenant, then God would provide such an oasis in the promised land for the entire people of God along with the nations of the world.

However, we know that *like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.* (Hosea 6:7 ESV) But as was the case with Adam, Old Testament Israel was never "Plan A." Christ was always the plan as the Second Adam and the True Israel, the son called by God out of Egypt.

## **The Substance: The Cross of Christ transforms the bitterness of this life into something sweet and enables us to stand firm in the trial with the hope of Christ.**

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* (1 Peter 2:24 ESV)

<sup>13</sup> *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—<sup>14</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.* (Galatians 3:13-14 ESV)

First and foremost, this story points to the reality of the gospel. Sin left us in a bitter estate with no chance of life. But by means of the cross—namely our Savior becoming a curse for us by hanging on a tree—the bitterness of sin could miraculously be replaced by the sweet living water of the Holy Spirit that wells up within us unto eternal life. For as Jesus told the woman at the well, "<sup>13</sup> *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,* <sup>14</sup> *but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*" (John 4:13-14 ESV) Had God not intervened in the wilderness, the Israelites certainly would have died, and had God not intervened in our lives, we too would have certainly experienced eternal death, for the wages of sin is death.

Beyond our initial salvation, this episode also points forward to the effect of the cross in our life. Like the Israelites, we too have been saved from our slavery to sin. We too have experienced deliverance from death by the blood of the lamb. We too have been baptized, not into the Red Sea or into Moses, but in the Spirit into Christ and his people. Also like the Israelites, we have not arrived yet to the promised land, and we continue to face many bitter experiences in this life. If approached with faith, we will see how the bitter trial is working together for something good for us.

Consider the following passages:

<sup>2</sup> *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* (James 1:2–4 ESV)

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28 ESV)

<sup>16</sup> *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* (2 Corinthians 4:16–18 ESV)

The hope of the trial is rooted in the victory Christ secured for his people at the cross. The bitterness of Marah preceded the Oasis of Elim, the bitterness of the cross preceded the exaltation in the resurrection and the ascension, and the bitterness of our life in this world precedes the oasis of New Jerusalem—a glorious city built on the foundation of the testimony about Christ from twelve apostles with its river of life flowing from the throne of Christ lined with trees of life with twelve kinds of fruit which are for the healing of all the nations.

## Apply

***Don't let the trial overwhelm you that you depart from the one who is your healer.***

The trial can be an instance when someone is tempted by Satan to grumble against God as the Israelites did. Remember, being angry at God is the utmost foolishness. It's not like God can't handle such a thing; it's us that can't handle such a thing. It is normal to be frustrated at one's circumstances, but when that anger is directed toward God, we are willfully driving a wedge between us and the only one who can bring about healing in our circumstance. Those who counsel someone to be angry at God are leading others into folly. Remember: there's a vast difference between lament "How long Oh Lord" and bitter anger "How Dare You God" (Burk)

In the trial especially, we are to draw near to God in faith, trusting that he is our healer—even if we don't get everything or if the timing is working out as we wished it would. For as Paul explained,

<sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* (Romans 5:1-6 ESV)

***The wound may not heal in this life, but the cross assures us that Christ will wipe away our every tear and bring us into the oasis of his presence.***

I can offer no guarantee that everything will get better in time. Some wounds, frankly, do not heal this side of eternity. What I can assure you of, however, is that the Lord remains in control and is near to you (Ps. 34:18; Job 1–2). I can assure you that the Lord is not turning his nose up at you but is rejoicing of all of those who are his people in Christ (Zep 3:17). I can assure you that God is the God of all comfort and is currently comforting those in Christ enduring any and all affliction (2 Cor 1:3–5). And I can assure you that the Lord will make all things new and wipe away your every tear (Rev 21:3–5). The Oasis of New Jerusalem is coming for those currently drinking the bitter water of Marah. Do not lose hope.









MeadowBrook  
CHURCH

2525 Rainbow Dr. Gadsden, AL, 35901 | (256) 442-3550 | [mbchurch.com](http://mbchurch.com)

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