



The Essentials Series

Week 9 – Moses: Childhood to Meeting God Exodus 1:1-4:17

St. George's Episcopal Church
Spring 2015

The Book of Exodus

- This second book of the Bible marks the movement of God's salvation plan from Patriarchal Family to Nation, that is, the nation of Israel.
 - God raises up a leader in Moses, who is his chosen instrument to lead Israel from slavery in Egypt back to Canaan.
 - At Sinai, on the way to the Promised Land, God covenantally binds himself to Israel through the giving of the Law and establishing his dwelling amidst the Israelites in the Tabernacle.
- All this takes place around 1440 BC, and Moses is traditionally presumed to be the author, but with some later edits.
 - Some argue for a slightly later date around 1250 BC, based on some archaeological finds
 - However, it is fair to say archaeology has not disproved the earlier date, and Exodus does not supply any of the Pharaoh's names to give us a more exact date. In either case the Merneptah stele indicates Israel's presence in Canaan by the year 1220.
- A story of redemption and covenant
 - The book opens with a direct connection to the Patriarchs of Genesis, naming all of Jacob's sons.
 - Because Israel grows so numerous (Abrahamic covenant being fulfilled), Egypt fears them, because the newest pharaoh "did not know Joseph". Consequently Israel is enslaved and later culled of their firstborns.
 - But God hears his people's cries and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:24).

Enter: Moses

- What were the circumstances of Moses birth?
 - Slavery (1:8-14) and systematic infanticide (1:15-16,22)
 - Parentage: of the Tribe of Levi, both father and mother (2:1)
 - Spared through a basket/ark (2:3)
 - Divine 'coincidence' with Pharaoh's daughter finding him
- The narrative skips many years in one sentence, 2:10 to 11, from Moses as infant to Moses "grown up".
 - Moses was raised with all the benefits, luxuries, and education of the royal household.
 - But he has not forgotten who he is, because by God's grace he was allowed to be raised by his natural parents
 - The penalty for vengeance and murder (2:12-13)
- Moses flees to Midian
 - Marries Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian, and has a son named Gershom.
 - Moses lives in Midian, tending Jethro's flocks for many years.
 - Meanwhile Israel's oppression remains, even though the old Pharaoh has died (2:23).

Enter: God

- Moses would likely have finished the rest of his days in Midian. But God had other plans.
- The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been silent for 400 years, and now he speaks directly to Moses
 - He speaks from a burning bush of all things. Note, there is no dream or vision (like with Joseph), no physical interaction (like with Jacob), but direct discourse, like with Abraham.
- Two things to note about God in his immediate initial interaction with Moses:
 - Covenant promises invoked – God identifies himself covenantally as the God of Moses ancestors
 - God's holiness – to approach God and relate to him must be on his terms, not Moses.
 - Both these key revelations will play out heavily in the rest of Exodus, and indeed, the whole life of Israel.
- Go to pharaoh – God is setting up a cosmic showdown with Pharaoh
- Moses asks for God's name
 - Both Moses rep is on the line, as is God's!
 - I Am who I Am has sent you - the Name that is not a name, but the very ground and source of all Being