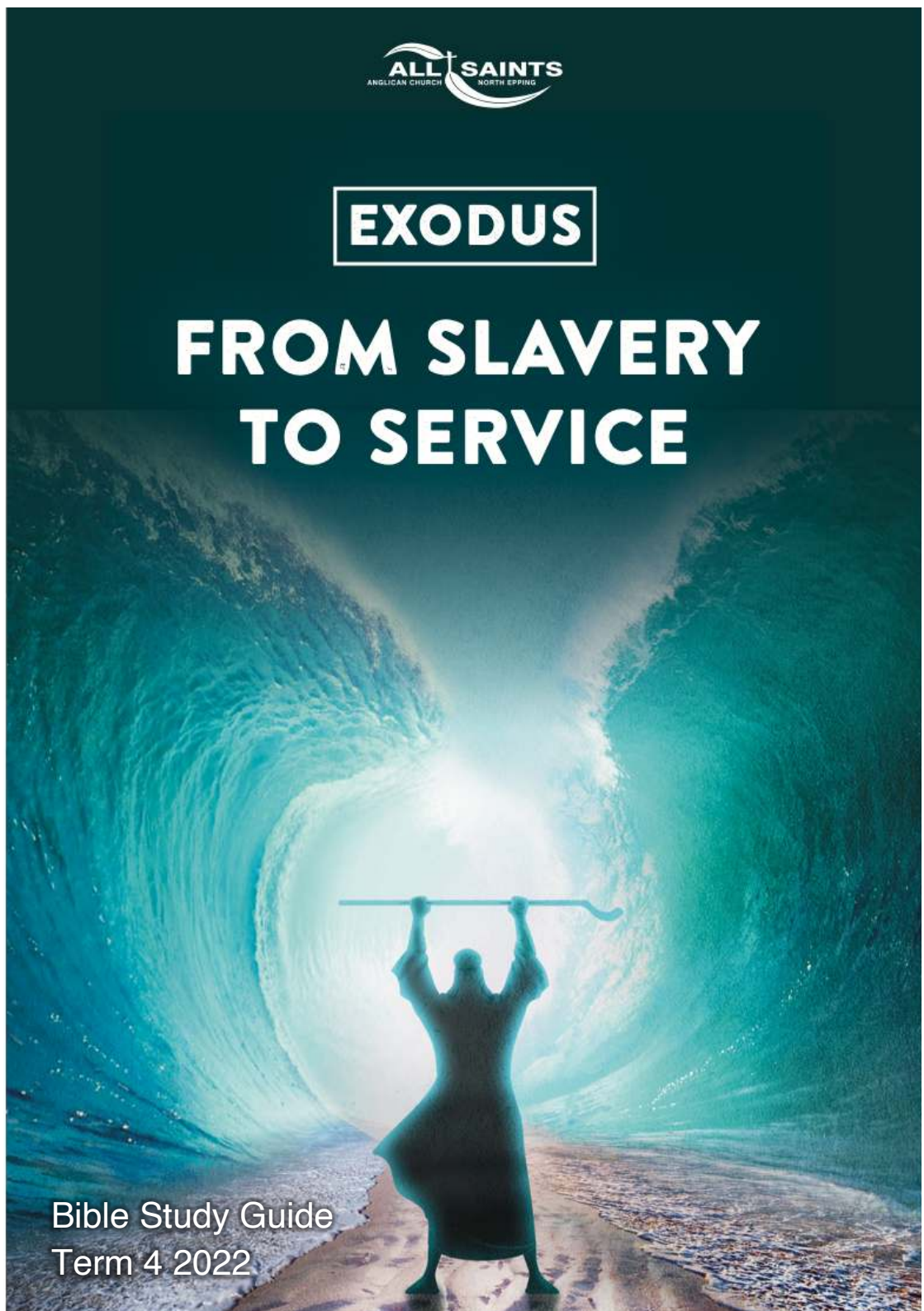


EXODUS

FROM SLAVERY TO SERVICE

Bible Study Guide
Term 4 2022



Study 1: Exodus 1-4

This term we are going on a fast-paced adventure with the book of Exodus. There is lots to get through in a short time.

We don't know exactly how and when Exodus was written, but it's reasonable to think that Moses himself played a part in its composition. We also don't know the exact dates of the events in Exodus - they would be some time in the period 1500-1200 BC. The narrator doesn't give us all the precise details we might like to know (for example, the pharaohs are never named). Instead he tells us a story of how God worked powerfully to rescue a people for himself.

There are various ways of dividing up the book, but the simplest is this:

- *The escape from Egypt (chapters 1-18)*
- *The covenant at Mount Sinai (chapters 19-40).*

Exodus, and the whole of the Old Testament, is driven by the promises that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12 onwards. We'll start by reviewing those.

Read Genesis 12:2-3, 12:6-7 and 15:5

1. Fill in the blanks to list the three parts of God's promise to Abraham:

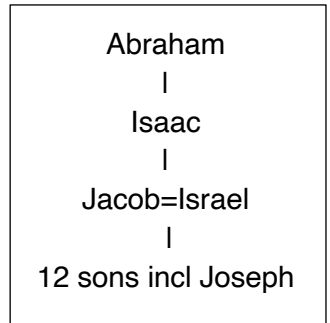
- L_____ of Caanan
- G_____ N_____ (many o_____)
- Be B_____ and B_____ the world

At the end of Genesis (which we studied in term 2 2021), Abraham's descendants had moved to Egypt, where Joseph had become a high ranking official who could save them from famine. That's where the book of Exodus picks up the story.

Read Exodus 1:1-7

2. Which promises to Abraham are being fulfilled here?

3. Which promises are still unfulfilled?



Read Exodus 1:8-22

4. The Israelites' God-given growth is seen as a threat by the king of Egypt (Pharaoh). What strategies does he use to reduce their numbers? Does he succeed?
5. Do we see God keeping any promises here?

As chapter 1 ends, we see Egyptian oppression of God's people rising and rising. We wonder what God will do in response. As usual, help comes from an unexpected place.

Read Exodus 2:1-10

6. Pharaoh's edict about throwing Hebrew babies into the Nile river was designed to eliminate the Hebrews. But in this case, what has the policy led to?

Read Exodus 2:11-22

7. How would you summarise Moses' life so far, in a handful of dot points?

Read Exodus 2:23 – 3:10

8. What do we learn here about God's character?
9. What does God plan to do?

Read Exodus 3:11 – 4:17

10. Moses has a bunch of reservations, concerns or objections. What are they?

3.11	
3.13	
4.1	
4.10	
4.13	

11. Do you think his concerns are reasonable? How would you describe Moses' character here?

12. How does God respond to Moses' concerns and objections?

3.12	
3.14-22	
4.2-9	
4.11-12	
4.14-17	

13. What do we learn here about God's character?

The name of the LORD: Exodus 3:13-15 contains an interesting, and much debated, discussion of God's name — "the LORD".

(Technical background for those who are interested: Whenever LORD is written in capitals in our English bibles, it's translating the Hebrew consonants YHWH (original Hebrew texts didn't contain vowels), probably originally pronounced "Yahweh". But over the years, anxious not to use the Lord's name in vain, Hebrew speakers started substituting the word adonai ("my lord") when reading out loud. This is the origin of the conventional English translation LORD. It's also the of the odd word "Jehovah" which comes from combining the consonants YHWH with the vowels of adonai.)

Unlike the more generic word “God” (Hebrew elohim), the LORD (YHWH) is the personal name of the God of Israel which distinguishes him from the gods of other nations. Exodus 3 is actually not the first time God’s name appears. It’s first used in Genesis 2:4, and Abraham calls on the name of the LORD from Genesis 13:4 onwards. It’s likely that here the LORD is giving Moses his name so that the Israelites will believe that the one who appeared to Moses really is the God of their ancestors.

YHWH seems to be derived from the Hebrew verb “to be”. Prior to revealing his actual name in v15, God ambiguously hints at its meaning in v14 – “I am who I am”, or “I will be what I will be”, or “I will bring about what I bring about”.

Read Exodus 4:18-31

14. As Moses journeys to Egypt, what kind of reception does God say he will receive there?

Verses 24-26 seem very strange, and even ancient Jewish commentators struggled to understand them. Circumcision was the mark of the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:10). Moses, born into a Hebrew family, would have been circumcised, but it seems his son Gershom, raised amongst Midianites, was not. Verse 24 literally says “the Lord met him and was about to kill him”, so it might be Gershom rather than Moses who was in danger, due to being uncircumcised. Unanswered questions remain, but we can at least see here that failing to keep the conditions of the covenant has serious consequences for God’s people. We’ll see more of later in Exodus.

15. As the chapter ends, what is the Israelites’ stance towards the Lord and his chosen leader?

Consider all we’ve read today

16. How do the truths we’ve learned about God’s character comfort or encourage you?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 2: Exodus 5-10

We can consider the plot of this drama as a contest between two opposing powers. On one side the stubborn Pharaoh and his crafty magicians and on the other Yahweh, 'the God of the Hebrews' represented by Moses and Aaron. According to Egyptian religion, the pharaoh was the embodiment of deity and therefore was believed to possess superhuman wisdom and power. (The Living World of the Old Testament, Bernhard W Anderson)

Moses has returned to Egypt to see Pharaoh. He is armed with the promise from the LORD of signs and wonders and with a spokesperson in his brother Aaron. On his arrival in Egypt, he had met with the elders of the Israelites who bowed down and worshipped when they realised that the LORD had seen their misery and was about to help them.

Read Exodus 5:1-9 – The LORD's demand and Pharaoh's reaction

1. a. Briefly summarise the words of Moses and Aaron and the responses of Pharaoh.

Moses and Aaron	Pharaoh
v.1	v.2
v.3	vv.4-5
	vv.6-9

- b. What do we learn from this about the attitude of Pharaoh towards the LORD and towards the Israelites?

Read Exodus 5:10-21 – the Israelites’ reaction

2. The Israelites must have had high hopes for Moses and Aaron’s mission to Pharaoh, but things haven’t turned out as hoped. How do the Israelites react?
3. How has the Israelites’ reaction changed since 4:31? Does this reveal something about them?
4. Have you ever been in a situation in which you really felt God was with you, but then circumstances changed and you felt abandoned? How do we work through these types of situations?

Read Exodus 5:22 - 6:12 – Moses’ reaction

5. How did Moses deal with the apparent setback to his purpose?
6. The LORD responds.
 - a. What reassurance does he give Moses?
 - b. What reassurance does he offer Israel?
 - c. What instructions does he have for Pharaoh?
 - d. Reflect: What can we learn here about dealing with setbacks?

Exodus 6:13-27, which we won’t read aloud, gives us the genealogy of Moses and Aaron (see v20), showing their position in the priestly tribe of Levi, one of the 12 sons of Israel/Jacob.

Read Exodus 6:28 – 7:7

7. The LORD sends Moses, with Aaron, to speak to Pharaoh again. What outcome does the LORD predict? What is his purpose?

Read Exodus 7:8 – 8:19 (battle of the staffs, then plagues 1-3)

8. Why was Pharaoh not convinced by the original miracle involving Aaron's staff?
9. Who were the first to be convinced that it was God acting, and why were they convinced?

Read Exodus 8:20 – 9:12 (plagues 4-6)

10. A new aspect to the plagues appears here: not everybody is affected. Why is this? What point do you think the LORD is making?

Read Exodus 9:13 – 10:29 (plagues 7-9)

11. Pharaoh continues to harden his heart against the LORD. What responses do we see from some of his officials? (See 9:20 & 10:7)
12. Look at the places where the LORD gives instructions to Moses. What does he reveal about his purpose in doing all this?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 3: Exodus 11:1 - 13:16

1. In the last study we read about 9 devastating plagues on Egypt. In the aftermath of these plagues, what is the situation of the Israelites? How might they be feeling?

Read Exodus 11:1-10

2. What reassurance does the LORD give Moses about this final plague?
3. What evidence is there of the LORD's care and provision for his people?
4. Outline the nature of this final plague and what its effect would be on the Egyptians and the Israelites.

Read Exodus 12:1 – 13:16

The tenth plague and the Passover narrative resonate with us today as we reflect on the salvation experience of the Israelites and see in it an image of our own salvation experience.

5. Identify and discuss the link between each Exodus reference and the New Testament verses given

Exodus 12:12-13	John 3:16	
Exodus 12:21-22	Matthew 26:26-28	
Exodus 13:14	John 8:34-36	

6. Look again at 12:31-33. What have Pharaoh and the Egyptians learned about the Israelites and the LORD?

7. At the same time their salvation from Egypt was being enacted, the Israelites were given an ongoing practice for remembering it. Look at 12:43-49. Can you see reasons for the regulations about celebrating the Passover meal?

8. Christians are also given a way of remembering our great redemption event. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. What is similar and different about the way we celebrate and remember the key events of our salvation?

Read Exodus 13:1-16

9. As well as the festival of unleavened bread discussed above, the LORD instructs his people to set apart (consecrate) the first offspring of every womb.
 - a. How does this relate to the dramatic events of the previous chapters?

 - b. What reason does the LORD give for setting up this practice?

10. What things could we consecrate, or set apart, to assist us in
 - a. remembering our salvation

 - b. living our lives as a witness to others

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 4: Exodus 13:17 - 15:21

In these two chapters we see the great act of salvation in the Old Testament, and God's people responding in praise.

Read Exodus 13:17-22

1. Why didn't God allow the Israelites to go by the most direct route to the land of Canaan?
2. Moses took Joseph's bones with him. What was the reason for doing this? (See Gen. 50:22-26).
3. How does God provide light and guidance for the Israelites on the journey?

Read Exodus 14:1-14

4. How did God explain his plan of salvation to Moses?
5. Describe the reaction of the Israelites when they saw the Egyptians coming.

Read Exodus 14:15-31

6. How did Moses respond to his people's cries for help when they saw the Egyptians coming after them?
7. What was God's purpose in rescuing his people in this particular way? (See v 4 and v 17)

8. Describe how the Israelites were saved and how they responded to their deliverance. What did God want the Egyptians to learn through this event?

9. “Salvation is not about words and ideas, but a Saviour strong enough to defeat the tyrant and release the captive”. Can you see how this event in Exodus is a blueprint for your salvation also?

Read Exodus 15:1-21

This song of Moses and Miriam is an outpouring of praise to the God who delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh.

10. Summarise each section of the poem:

15:1-10	
15:11-13	
15:14-16	
15:17-18	

11. Who is the hero of this poem and how is he described?

12. Find some parts of this poem that can encourage you in your journey with the Lord.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 5: Exodus 15:22 - 18:27

Having experienced and praised God for his mighty act of salvation in the previous chapters, today we see how daily physical needs come to dominate the lives of the Israelites. In each of the incidents we will read about there is a pattern of what happens and how God responds. If you are studying in a group you could divide the incidents between a few people then report back with your findings.

Read Exodus 15:22-27 – The need for water (1)

1. What problem arises?
2. How do the people react?
3. What does Moses do?
4. How does God respond?

Read Exodus 16 - The need of food

5. What problem arises?
6. How do the people react?
7. What does Moses do?
8. How does God respond?

Read Exodus 17:1-7 - The need for water (2)

9. What problem arises?

10. How do the people react?

11. What does Moses do?

12. How does God respond?

Read Exodus 17:8-16 - The need of protection

13. What problem arises?

14. How is the issue resolved?

15. How is God involved in the resolution?

Read Exodus 18 - The need for delegation of responsibility

16. What problem arises?

17. How is the issue resolved?

18. How is God involved in the resolution?

Consider all that we've read today

19. Are there things that you grumble about? Have you ever seen God supply your needs in the ways he did for the Israelites?

20. How can we help each other not to have hard hearts like the Israelites and trust God for all our needs?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 6: Exodus 19

1. **Opening Question:** Have you ever had an experience or been to a place that filled you with awe? Why was it so awesome?

The Israelites have been on an incredible journey! God has rescued them from the hand of the Egyptians with acts of immense power. They have escaped Egypt through the Red Sea and now stand at the foot of Mt Sinai ready to receive Gods law.

Read Exodus 19:1-8

2. How does God describe the journey and destination of the Israelites? How this change the way we might view the story so far?
3. What God want the Israelites to do?
4. How does God describe His relationship with the Israelites?
5. Read 1 Peter 2:4-10. How does Peter describe our relationship with God if we have believed in Jesus? Can you see similarities with Exodus 19?

6. Does the relationship in Exodus sound somewhat conditional? As Christians, what does our relationship with God depend on?

Read Exodus 19:9-15

7. God is about to meet with Moses on Mt Sinai to give the Israelites his holy commandments and laws. How are the people to prepare for this event?
8. What restrictions are put in place? Why do you think these restrictions existed?
9. Describe the events of that ominous day. How did the people respond?

Read Hebrews 12:18-24

10. In what ways is our experience through Christ even more awesome than the events experienced at Mt Sinai?

11. How should we respond to Jesus in light of these passages (consider also v25 and v28)?

Prayer

- Thank God for bringing us into relationship with him through Jesus obedience and grace.
- Ask God to strengthen us to live for him faithfully in view of this awesome salvation.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 7: Exodus 20

Today we look at a very famous chapter. The ten commandments are well known but often not well understood.

1. Off the top of your head: which of the following seems like the best description of what the 10 commandments are all about:
 - A. *How to please God*
 - B. *How to get into heaven*
 - C. *How to live a quality life*
 - D. *How to know how sinful you are*
 - E. *What was important for ancient Israel*
 - F. *How to evangelise*
 - G. *How to be a moral person*
 - H. *How to become one of God's people*

2. Recall from chapter 19 last week: Where are the Israelites? How did they get here? What is God's intention for them?

Read Exodus 20:1-17

The giving of the ten commandments seems to have been the one time God spoke directly to his people as a whole. The "ten words" form an "executive summary" of all the detailed laws given subsequently. The laws don't tell people how to become God's people. But they do explain how Israel were to live as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (19:6), bound to the Lord by covenant. Ignoring them will mean Israel face curses instead of blessings.

3. How would you divide the ten commandments into 2-4 categories?

4. Sprinkled amongst the actual commandments are various facts about the Lord. What are they? What do they show us about the relationship between the giver and receiver of these commands?

5. What aspects of God's character are revealed by the commands themselves? Look through each commandment and consider: what kind of God would give this kind of law?

6. Look at verses 5-6.
 - a) How do you feel about the Lord being a "jealous God" and punishing subsequent generations?

 - b) Deuteronomy 24:16, also a law given through Moses, says "Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents". Do these contradict? Or can you see a way they fit together?

The New Testament reiterates commandments 1-3 and 5-10 as God's will for Christian living.¹ But the only place Sabbath is mentioned in the New Testament letters is Colossians 2:16, where sabbaths and other festivals are labelled 'a shadow of what was to come', so nobody should be judged by not fulfilling them. Weekly rest remains wisdom from God, but the setting aside of Saturdays in particular seems to have been specific to ancient Israel (like circumcision, the temple and the sacrificial system) and doesn't carry over to the NT church (see Acts 15:5,19-20)

Read Exodus 20:18-21

7. What was the Israelites' response to hearing God speak?

8. Do you think there is a rightful place for fear of God in the Christian life? In what ways would it be right, or wrong, to fear God? What might positive fear of God look like in practice for us?

¹ See for example: Matthew 22:37 (commandment 1 and summary of others), 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (commandments 2,7,8), 1 Peter 2:17 (fear of God as an expression of commandment 3), Ephesians 6:2-3 (commandment 5), Romans 13:9 (commandments 6,7,8,9,10).

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 8: Exodus 20:22 - 24:11

As we read the ten commandments last week, we probably found them quite attractive - but ancient Israel responded in terror! As we read further in Exodus we encounter more specific laws that we find much more confronting. But once again, the ancient reaction was quite different. To understand the detailed laws of Exodus 21-23 we're going to first have a good look at their context.

Consider the context so far:

1. Read Exodus 19:3-6. What is Israel's mission?
2. Read Matt 22:36-40. How did Jesus summarise the commandments?

Before diving into the detailed laws of chapters 21-23, we're going to get some more context by reading what comes at the end.

Read Exodus 23:20-33

3. What lies in the future for the Israelites?
4. What dangers are they warned about?

We'll now consider the detailed laws of chapters 21-23, but we won't read them from beginning to end. In contrast to the big-picture principles in the 10 commandments, these are rulings about how the overall law is to be applied, in specific situations, like those that might be issued by a modern court. They cover some sample scenarios, but not every possible situation.

As we read the specifics, we're reminded that they were given to God's people at a particular point of salvation history, and in a specific cultural context – the ancient near east over 3000 years ago.²

² Further reading: <https://www.asor.org/onetoday/2021/10/rethinking-slavery>

5. Look up the following snippets from the detailed laws of chapters 21-23 and see if you can categorise them in the table below.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| a) 21:12-14 | e) 22:1-4 | i) 23:1 |
| b) 21:17 | f) 22:18-20 | j) 23:10-12 |
| c) 21:18-19 | g) 22:31 | k) 23:13 |
| d) 21:28-32 | h) 22:20 | l) 23:19b |

Related to the 10 commandments: Love God and love your neighbour	Related to Israel's mission: Kingdom of priests and Holy Nation	Don't know what's going on

Some of these laws we simply don't understand, because we don't have the mindset of those to whom they were given. Others shock us in their harshness, or because they seem to accept the ancient assumption that women and slaves were a kind of property. We find ourselves surprised that God didn't just impose a modern egalitarian society. But rather than comparing to today's society, we should consider how these laws are challenging the widespread assumptions of ancient near east.

6. What aspects of God's character can we discern through these laws?

7. If you were an Israelite and you heard Moses repeat all these laws from God, how would you feel and how would you react?

Read Exodus 24:3-8

8. What label would you use for Israel's reaction?
9. Look at verses 6-8. What similarities can you see to a wedding ceremony?

Christians today are not bound by these commandments as law. But we, like ancient Israel, are a holy people "married" to the Lord by covenant (1 Peter 2:9).

10. Consider the aspects of God's character we see shining through in Exodus 21-24. How can we be guided by this in living as God's holy people today?

Notes & Prayer Points
