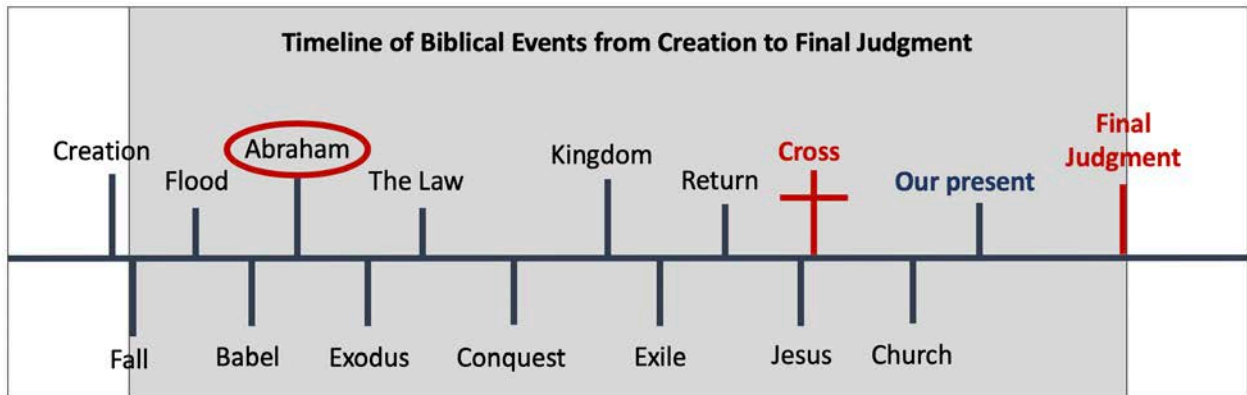


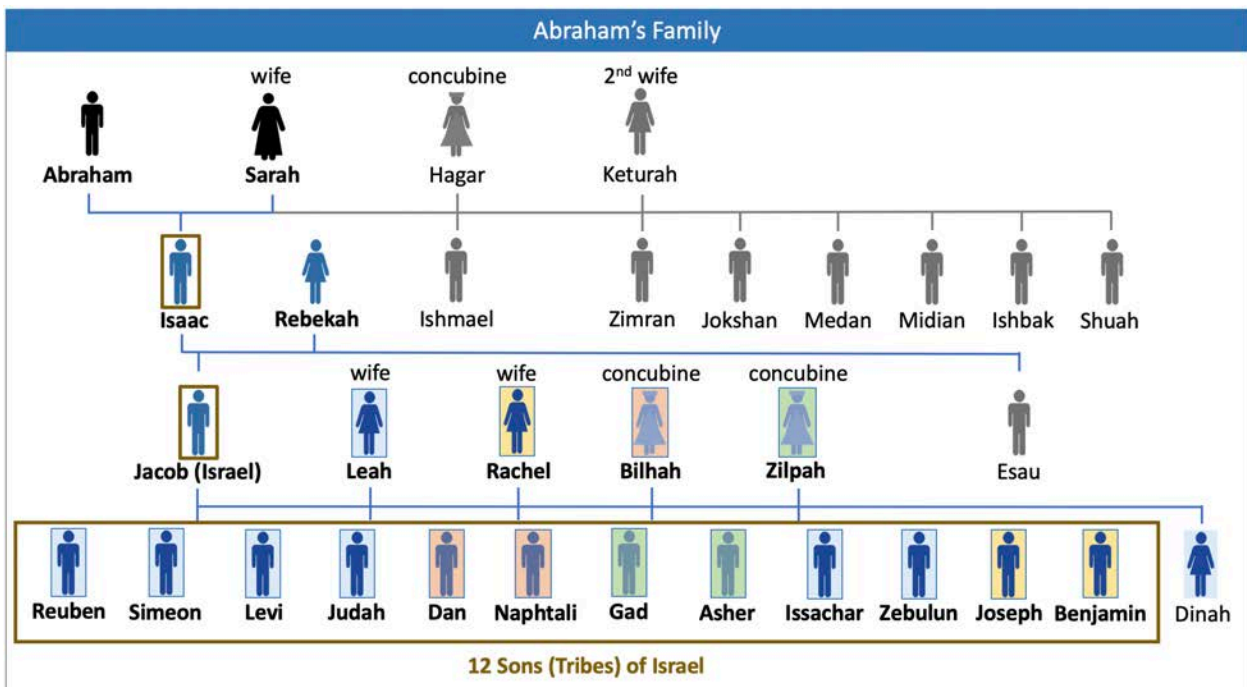
Lesson 11: Israel vs Egypt

Previously...

After the Flood, men built the Tower of Babel as a sign of their rebellion against God. They created the “Kingdom of Man” and made themselves the ultimate authority. Their choice would lead to eternal death and God rejected it. Instead, He chose to disrupt history. He elected one man, Abraham, and his family to preserve His story. Through them, He would broadcast His accurate truth and also provide the promised Saviour as the solution to sin.

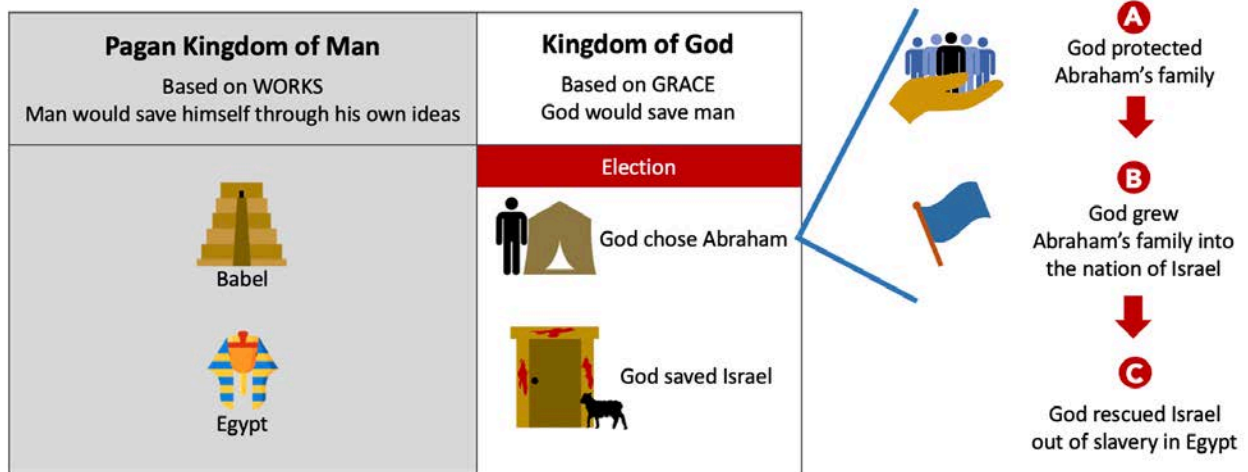


God’s Election of Abraham: Implications for his Descendants



God’s election of Abraham and His commitment to the covenant He made meant that He was actively engaged with Abraham’s family. God further elected even within Abraham’s family by choosing only to work His promise through Isaac and then Jacob.

This is what God’s “election” of Abraham looked like in the generations after Abraham’s death. As He promised, He had to protect Abraham’s family and ensure their survival. And He also had to multiply them and grow them into a nation.



A. God protected Abraham’s family

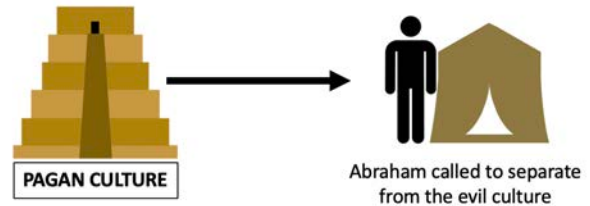
Three generations of Abraham’s family had lived in Canaan since Abraham’s time. However, during Abraham’s grandson Jacob’s time, there were two very severe threats to Abraham’s descendants.



The first threat: physical death. While the land was very productive during Abraham’s time, a severe and very prolonged famine struck the entire region in his grandson Jacob’s time. Jacob’s entire family risked dying from starvation. How would Jacob’s entire family escape death from the famine?



The second threat: cultural death. While Abraham had a very close relationship with God and obeyed His command to be separated from the surrounding culture, his descendants saw nothing wrong with mixing with the surrounding evil culture.



For example, Jacob's son, Judah found no problem with having sex with who he thought was a Canaanite shrine prostitute. Tamar was actually Judah's first daughter-in-law with his first son. But God put her wicked husband to death. Following tradition, Tamar married the second son. But the wicked man refused to produce children with her because the child would bear the name of his older brother. So God put him to death as well. After this, Judah defrauded Tamar and prevented her from marrying his third son. So Tamar disguised herself as a Canaanite shrine prostitute and became pregnant through Judah (Genesis 38:6–16, 27). What Judah did with Tamar, whom he thought was a Canaanite, was both a moral and religious problem! He was intermingling with the Canaanite religion that he should have kept away from!



Just like what happened with Noah's family, the Bible records that Abraham's family was very dysfunctional and did not follow in his faithfulness to God. But because God had elected Abraham and made a covenant with him, He was not going to let Abraham's family die or self-destruct.

So Yahweh intervened to keep Abraham's descendants (i) alive and (ii) prevent them from intermarrying and intermingling with the Canaanites, thereby losing their identity and worldwide mission entirely.

Into Egypt

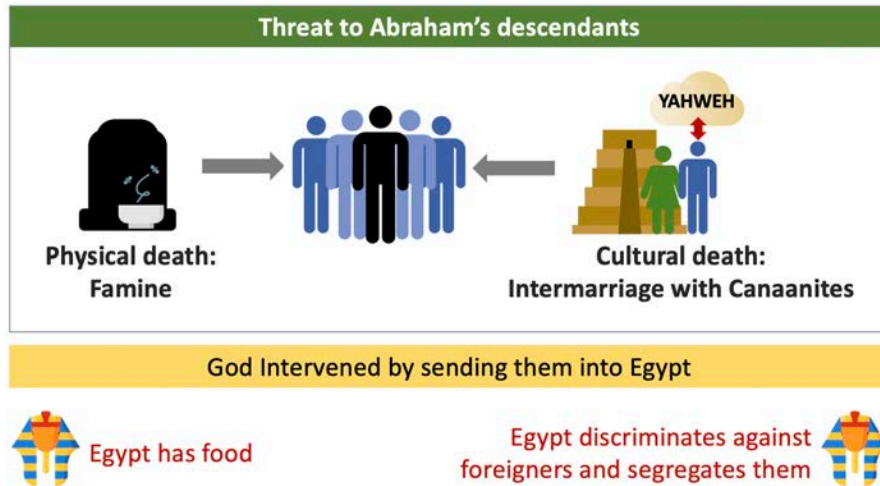
As the master of history, Yahweh coordinated events and sent Abraham's family to a foreign land. In fact, God had earlier warned Abraham that this would happen, at the covenant signing ceremony (the halving of the animals).

Genesis 15:12–16

¹² As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵ (As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶ After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction."

To preserve the family, God chose to send the family into Egypt. But of all the different lands, why Egypt?

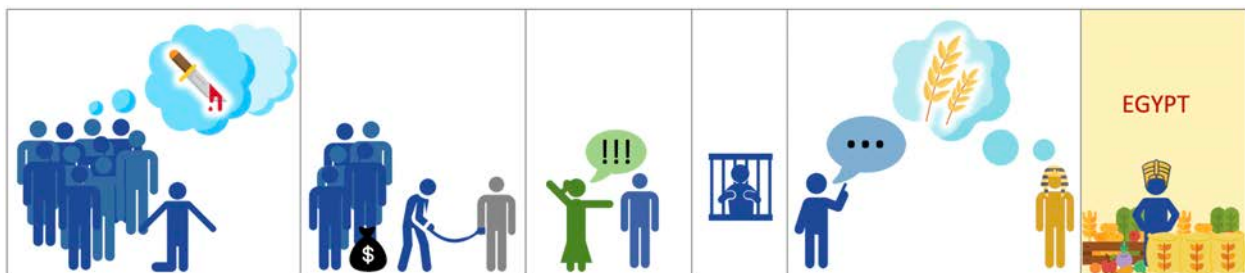
This is because Egypt had food and they were a discriminatory society.



Food: Being sovereign, Yahweh used Jacob's dysfunctional family to pave the way for Jacob's son Joseph to become not just Prime Minister of Egypt, but the man in charge of the food programme and all the food rations! From there, Joseph was able to provide his family with all the food they needed to survive the long famine.



How did God do this? There was great strife in Jacob's family due to his favouritism towards one wife, Rachel, and her children. Out of jealous actions, Jacob had ended up with a blended family of two wives, two concubines, and a total of 12 sons and a daughter. The jealous brothers in trying to kill Joseph, ended up selling him to traders instead. The traders sold Joseph as a slave in Egypt. Later, Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into jail. However, in jail, God gave him the opportunity and ability to interpret dreams, including the dreams of Pharaoh. His success in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams caused Joseph to be appointed Prime Minister of Egypt.



When Jacob's family ran out of food, he sent his sons to Egypt to buy more. They ended up buying food from Joseph, their own brother! Although they did not recognise him at first, he later revealed his true identity to them (Genesis 37, 39–46).

God had planned to send Joseph ahead into Egypt so that through him, Yahweh would save the lives of Abraham's descendants!

This is how Joseph explained it to his brothers.

Genesis 45:4–8

⁴ “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵ But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. ⁶ This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷ God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. ⁸ So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

Joseph invited his whole family to live with him in Egypt where he would take care of them. And that was how Jacob and all his 70 family members ended up in Egypt.

Discrimination and segregation: Egypt was also God’s solution to prevent intermingling. The Canaanites and the other people groups in the region had no problems intermarrying with Abraham’s descendants. If the Israelites had continued to live with them, it would not be long before they would be culturally lost. However, the Egyptians were very different.



- The Egyptians looked down on all people who were non-Egyptians. Their society was so discriminatory that Egyptians refused to eat with non-Egyptians.

Genesis 43:32

The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them.

(Note: the “Hebrews” is a term referring to Abraham’s descendants.)

- The Egyptians despised shepherds, which was the occupation of Joseph’s family.
- In addition, non-Egyptians were not welcomed to physically live among them.

Hence, God worked it out for them to live in Egypt but in the area of Goshen, separate from the Egyptians (Genesis 47:5–6). Here, there was low risk that the Israelites would be mixed in and become culturally lost.



Is God really in charge of history? Or does man decide? Surely it can't be both, can it?

We learn something very important about Yahweh through the account of Abraham's family and particularly, Joseph. God is all-knowing. He knows everything that will happen in history.

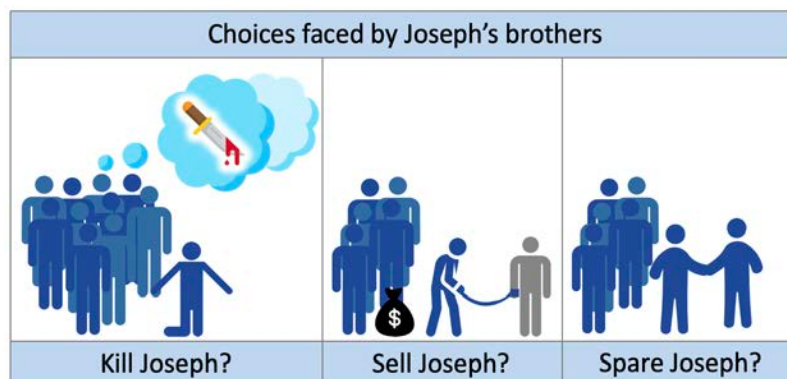
But He also knows all the "what ifs" of history. What if Joseph's brothers did not try to kill him? What if Joseph had not been sold into Egypt? What if there were no one in Egypt to help Jacob and his family to get food? God knows the answers to these questions. He knows all the different scenarios and how they would play out. He is all-knowing.

God is also all-powerful. He is the One who makes all the decisions in history. He is the One in control. Does this mean that people have no free will? No. People have free will to choose. But God is more than powerful enough to shepherd the course of history while letting everyone use their free will.

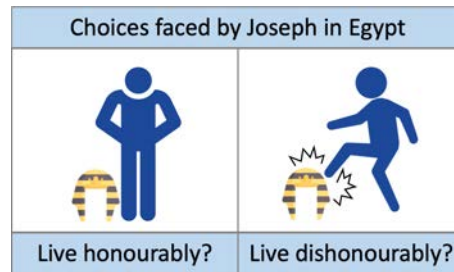


The account of what happened to Joseph shows us that:

- Joseph's brothers chose what they would do with him.



- Joseph chose how he would live in Egypt.



- Ultimately, given their choices, God still controlled the outcome.

Joseph himself explained to his brothers how God could direct history while giving man complete free will.

Genesis 50:20

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.

Joseph’s brothers were free to choose what they wanted to do. They made the **evil choice** to sell Joseph to traders who in turn took Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave (Genesis 37:36).

God acted sovereignly and made the **good choice** to send Joseph into Egypt so that Joseph could be put into position to save his family when the severe famine struck the land years later.

The brothers’ evil choice and Yahweh’s good choice resulted in the same action: Joseph was sent into Egypt! Should we praise God for saving Jacob’s family? Yes! Should we hold Joseph’s brothers responsible for selling him into slavery? Yes.



God knew exactly what choices the different people would make and He knew how to direct history so that events would play out according to His will. That was why Joseph could tell

his brothers that even though their evil choice to harm him caused him to be sent into Egypt, God chose that same event for a good purpose—to save many lives!

As the all-knowing, all-powerful God who directs history, He could tell Abraham what would happen to his family many years before even Joseph, his great-grandson, was born.

God tells us that (i) knowing history and (ii) telling the future is something that only God can do. He has told us our history. But He has also told us the future. God says that a good “test” to see if someone is “God” is if He can tell the future.

Isaiah 46:9–10

⁹ Remember the things I have done in the past.

For I alone am God!

I am God, and there is none like me.

¹⁰ Only I can tell you the future

before it even happens.

Everything I plan will come to pass,

for I do whatever I wish.



B. God grew Abraham’s family into the nation of Israel

God made Abraham a promise that he would be the father of a great number of descendants. And it was in Egypt that God miraculously grew Abraham’s family from a group of 70 to an entire nation of approximately 2.4 million people in 430 years. God had told Jacob of His plan years earlier when Joseph invited him to move to Egypt.



Descendants

Genesis 46:1–3

¹ So Jacob set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac. ² During the night God spoke to him in a vision. “Jacob! Jacob!” he called. “Here I am,” Jacob replied. ³ “I am God, the God of your father,” the voice said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make your family into a great nation.”

Earlier in his life, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (meaning “prevails with or clings to God”). And “Israel” becomes the name of the nation that grew from Abraham’s family.



But how did 70 people become 2.4 million? Life in Egypt started off well for the family, but after the death of Joseph and his generation, it changed. A new Pharaoh came to power.

Exodus 1:8–14

⁸ Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. ⁹ He said to his people, “Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. ¹⁰ We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don’t, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country.”

¹¹ So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king. ¹² But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. ¹³ So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.

Yahweh used their hardship to multiply them. Even in the midst of their suffering, God accomplished His purpose in His chosen people. He first elected Abraham, an individual. Then this individual grew into a family, and then God grew them into a nation. This was all for the specific mission to provide a way to reconcile mankind to Himself.



As slaves in Egypt, the Israelites had a routine and predictable life. They got up and went to bed at the same time every day. And in some ways, they had a certain level of security: they were guaranteed jobs, meals and a place to sleep. However, they were oppressed and so they cried to God for help.

**Exodus 2:24–25**

²⁴ God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.

When Yahweh “remembered” His covenant promise, it was not because He had forgotten. God does not forget.

Rather, the Hebrew word for “remember” includes the actions one takes to keep a promise. God “pulled out” the contract with Abraham and reviewed what He had agreed to do for Abraham and His family. It was now time for Him to act.





C. God saved Israel from Egypt

In His grace, God chose an Israelite man named Moses to save His people from slavery in Egypt. God appeared to Moses while he was tending to his flock of sheep. (Note: in the Old Testament, the phrase “the angel of the LORD” refers to God appearing in a physical way to people. These appearances would be the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity. Pre-incarnate means before Jesus took on physical human flesh. We will study this further in Lesson 34.)

Exodus 3:2–10

² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn’t burn up.

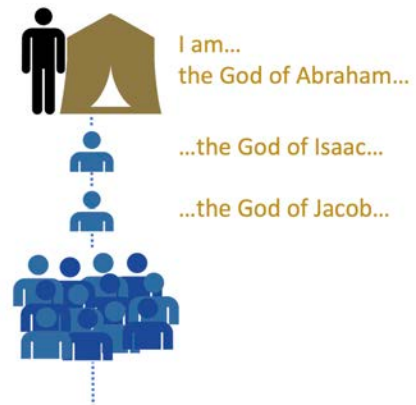
³ “This is amazing,” Moses said to himself. “Why isn’t that bush burning up? I must go see it.” ⁴ When the LORD saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, “Moses! Moses!” “Here I am!” Moses replied.

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” the LORD warned. “Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.

⁶ I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.




⁷ Then the LORD told him, “I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering.

⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. ⁹ Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. ¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.”



God did not identify himself to Moses as “the God of Adam, Eve and Noah”, although that would have been true. God deliberately identified himself as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”. Why? It is because Yahweh wanted Moses to know that the reason He was meeting him was because of the covenant promises He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This is what God said specifically to each one of them:

<p>Abraham</p> 	<p>God called Abraham and made him three specific promises: land, descendants and worldwide blessing.</p> <p>Genesis 12:1–3</p> <p>¹ The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and <u>go to the land that I will show you</u>. ² I will make you into <u>a great nation</u>. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. <u>All the families on earth will be blessed through you</u>.”</p>
<p>Isaac</p> 	<p>In speaking with Isaac, God confirms His covenant with Abraham.</p> <p>Genesis 26:1–5</p> <p>¹ A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham’s time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived. ² The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. ³ Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. <u>I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants</u>, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴ I will cause your <u>descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky</u>, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants <u>all the nations of the earth will be blessed</u>. ⁵ I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions.”</p>
<p>Jacob</p> 	<p>In speaking with Jacob, God again confirms His covenant with Abraham.</p> <p>Genesis 28:10–15</p> <p>¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. ¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.</p> <p>¹³ At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, “I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. <u>The ground you are lying on belongs to you</u>. I am giving it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ <u>Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth!</u> They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And <u>all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants</u>.</p> <p>¹⁵ What’s more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”</p>

In the Bible, we will see this phrase “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” many times. Each time we see this, we need to know that God is remembering or acting because of His covenant promises.



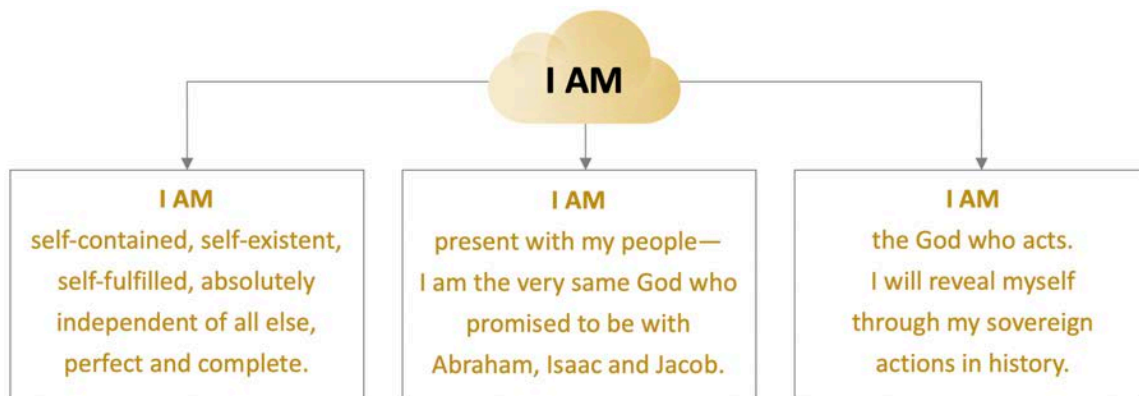
God wants us to know that He is a faithful, promise-keeping God. And He wants us to observe and understand the reasons behind His actions: He is keeping His promises and making sure they will be fulfilled. He will not hesitate to interrupt history and intervene in people’s lives to make sure that every single one of His promises will come true.

Moses was brought up in Pharaoh’s household so he would have been familiar with the many gods worshipped by the Egyptians. Although God had identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Moses asked specifically for God’s personal name.

Exodus 3:13–15

¹³ But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?” ¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.

God identified himself as “I AM” or YAHWEH in Hebrew. But what does that mean?



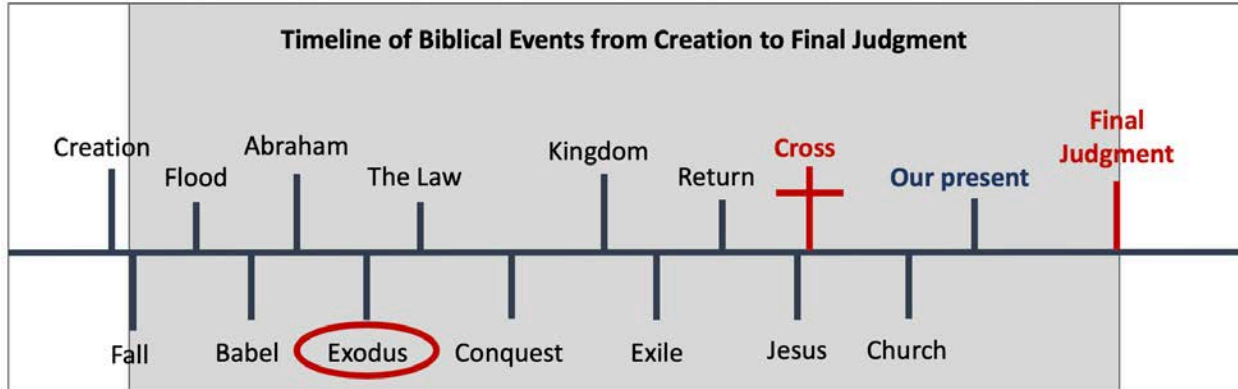
Following God’s instructions, Moses and his brother Aaron went to speak to Pharaoh after they had spoken to all the people.

Exodus 5:1–2

¹ After this presentation to Israel’s leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh. They told him, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness.” ² “Is that so?” retorted Pharaoh. “And who is the LORD? Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I don’t know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go.”



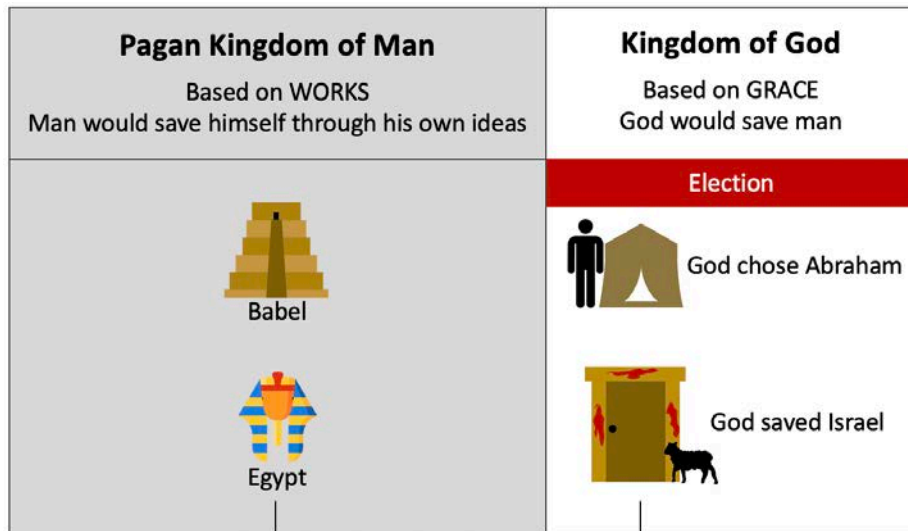
This sets the stage for the Exodus.



Exodus: A confrontation between the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God

The Exodus is one of the most important events to understand in the Old Testament. The event itself was a series of ten devastating plagues that Yahweh sent upon the land of Egypt. (Exodus 7–12). They took place over many months and caused countryside catastrophes that affected all of Egypt.

However, it was not just about Moses and Pharaoh fighting each other. The Exodus is a confrontation of two gods, two belief systems, two mighty ideas. These ideas will remain at war with one another for the span of history. Only one can win. Yahweh, the God of the universe, won.



Confrontation between:

- 2 gods
- 2 belief systems
- 2 mighty ideas

God used the account of the Exodus to teach mankind many important truths about the Kingdom of Man versus the Kingdom of God. We will go through three:

1. God alone is God. There is no other.
2. No world system or government can save man. Only God can save mankind.
3. God's grace is necessary for salvation and redemption. Man can do nothing but respond.

1. God alone is God. There is no other.

God categorically showed through the Exodus that He is the only one true God.



Egyptian magicians
are **NOT** gods



Egyptian gods
are **NOT** gods

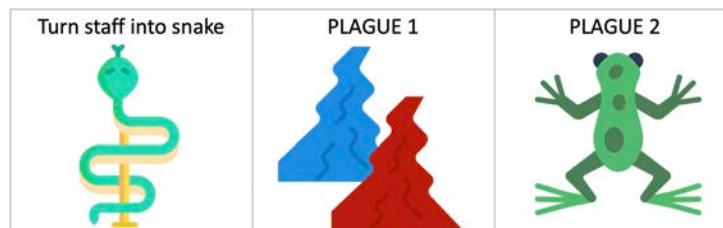


Pharaoh is
NOT god



i. The Egyptian magicians were not gods.

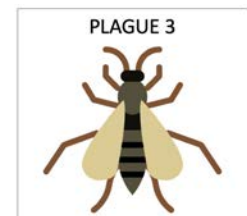
Initially, Pharaoh's magicians could fake or counterfeit Yahweh's miracles. Following the miracles that Moses and Aaron demonstrated, these magicians did the same by changing a staff into a snake, by turning water into blood, and by creating a plague of frogs! Pharaoh's magicians were very powerful! The demonic powers they summoned were not weak at all.



Pharaoh's magicians could mimic some of God's miracles

However, demonic powers are no match for Yahweh.

By the third plague, the magicians could not fake God's miracles any longer. They admitted they knew Yahweh was behind the miracles, even when they were working demonic magic!



Exodus 8:16–19

¹⁶ So the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Raise your staff and strike the ground. The dust will turn into swarms of gnats throughout the land of Egypt.'" ¹⁷ So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded them. When Aaron raised his hand and struck the ground with his staff, gnats infested the entire land, covering the Egyptians and their

animals. All the dust in the land of Egypt turned into gnats. ¹⁸ Pharaoh's magicians tried to do the same thing with their secret arts, but this time they failed. And the gnats covered everyone, people and animals alike.

¹⁹ "This is the finger of God!" the magicians exclaimed to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart remained hard. He wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted.


Though they simply said, "This is the finger of God", it's clear from the context that they were referring to the God that Moses was representing—Yahweh.



ii. The Egyptian gods were not really gods.

The Egyptians worshiped many different gods. They believed in "provincial" gods, meaning a god that is only in charge of one area of the earth or one aspect of nature like "god of the desert" or "god of the sun", etc.

Through the plagues, Yahweh systematically proved that they were not gods at all. With each plague, Yahweh went against one or more gods of Egypt. Even though these Egyptian gods "specialised" in certain areas of life, for example, the god of the flies or the god of the frogs, none of them was any match for Yahweh.

Plague	Bible Reference	Egyptian god that Yahweh was targeting
 1. Water turned to blood	Exodus 7:14–25	Gods linked to the Nile: Khnum, Hapi, Osiris
 2. Frogs	Exodus 8:1–15	Frog goddesses: Hapi, Heqt
 3. Lice (gnats)	Exodus 8:16–19	Earth god: Seb
 4. Flies	Exodus 8:20–32	Fly god: Uatchit
 5. Death of livestock	Exodus 9:1–7	Gods linked to cows/bulls: Ptah, Hathor, Mnevis, Amon
 6. Boils	Exodus 9:8–12	Goddess of epidemics: Sekhmet Gods of healing: Serapis, Imhotep
 7. Hail	Exodus 9:13–35	Sky goddess and god of the atmosphere: Nut, Shu Gods of agriculture: Isis, Seth
 8. Locusts	Exodus 10:1–20	Protector god from locusts: Serapia
 9. Darkness	Exodus 10:21–29	Sun gods: Re, Amon-re, Aten, Atum, Horus Moon god: Thoth
 10. Death of the firstborn	Exodus 12:29–36	All Egyptian gods, including Pharaoh himself.

Each of these plagues showed that it was Yahweh who had total control over the whole earth and not any of the gods the Egyptians worshipped.



iii. Pharaoh was not a god.

Egypt at that point in history was the “superpower” of the ancient world. They had high technology, great artistry and immense wealth.

In Egypt, Pharaoh himself was considered a god. He had all the authority and power in the land and was ranked as an equal or higher than the other gods. Pharaoh mediated or acted as a go-between for man and the other Egyptian gods to maintain order and peace.



In fact, during Joseph’s time, Pharaoh became even more of a god to the people. With Joseph’s help, Pharaoh was seen to have saved the world from starvation. In all the land of Egypt and the surrounding areas, after all the people’s money ran out, the people traded livestock, land and even themselves for food. Pharaoh ended up extremely wealthy. He owned and controlled all the land, many slaves and a great number of livestock (Genesis 47:13–21). Pharaoh became like a god walking on earth.

The Egyptians also saw Pharaoh as the state, or country. Interestingly, in the Egyptian language, there is no word for “state”. “Pharaoh” was the state. If Pharaoh died or something happened to him, the whole society was in trouble.

When Moses first approached Pharaoh, it was understandable that he refused to let Israel go. Pharaoh probably felt that this “god” of the Israelites was a weak god, because he was not in charge of some important area of life like water or sun. This “god” was only a god of the slaves, whom the Egyptians despised. So this god must not be a powerful “god” at all. However, through the Exodus event, Pharaoh would soon learn that this “god” of the slaves was none other than the Creator-God Himself.

The tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, was a specific judgment against the Pharaoh.

Many years earlier, the previous Pharaoh was afraid that the Israelites were multiplying so much and would turn against him, so he commanded that newborn Israelite boys be killed as a means of population control.

Exodus 1:22

Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live.”

Now God was going to judge Pharaoh for murdering His people.

Yahweh considered Israel to be His firstborn son. He warned Pharaoh that if he would not let His son Israel go free, then He would kill all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh’s firstborn son.

Exodus 4:22–23

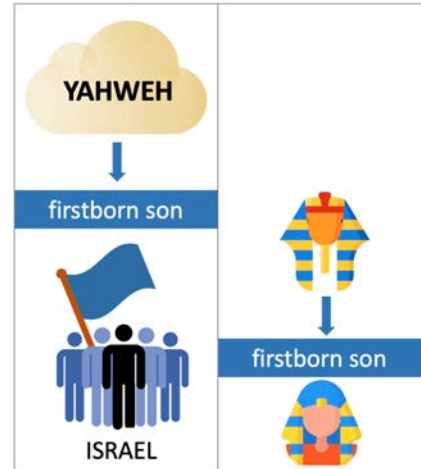
²² Then you will tell him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son. ²³ I commanded you, ‘Let my son go, so he can worship me.’ But since you have refused, I will now kill your firstborn son!’”

The tenth plague, the death of the firstborn, targeted all the false gods including Pharaoh, all at one go. Yahweh proved decisively that He alone is God.

Exodus 12:1, 12

¹ While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the LORD gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron:

¹² On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the LORD!



Pharaoh could not stop God from killing his firstborn nor the firstborn sons of all the Egyptian families. Even if all the Egyptians believed and treated Pharaoh like a god, the truth was that Pharaoh was not one.

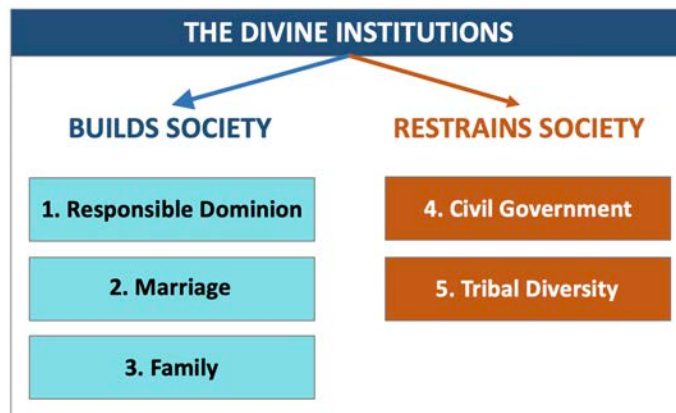
2. No world system or government can save man. Only God can save mankind.

Another very important lesson that God taught the people was that the government was not the saviour. God alone is in charge of everything and He alone can preserve and save mankind.

First, right after the global Flood, God promised to preserve the entire geophysical universe. Not only did He promise there would not be another global flood, He promised stability on the earth. He is the only One who can make this promise because He is in total control of the universe.





Second, God gave civil government as a restraining divine institution. The government’s job was to limit evil.



The government was never meant to be a “saviour”, saving people from what is bad in life and providing meaning and purpose to life. But the Egyptians perverted this divine institution.

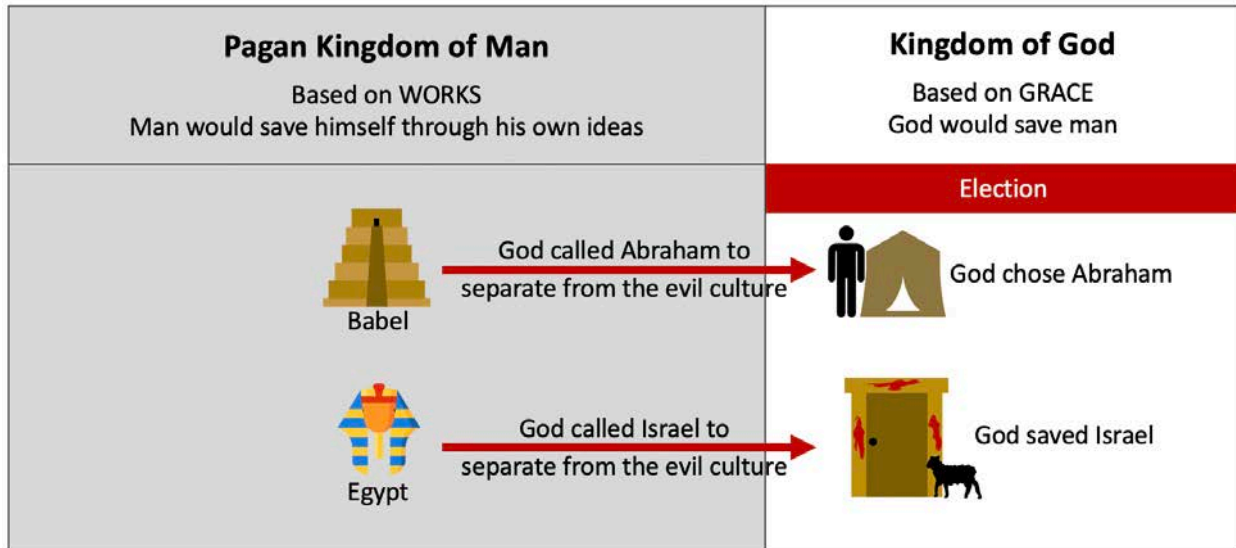
The Egyptians believed that the universe was changeless and all opposites must always be in balance. Therefore, they valued order, stability and permanence. They hated chaos. They did not like the idea of change or progress because they believed that what they had was already perfect.

To maintain this stability, they believed in the importance of a strong government. They believed that when Pharaoh and his centralised government had absolute control, they would have a smooth-running society and peace for all the people. And they would also have a favourable geophysical environment as Pharaoh was in charge of mediating with the different gods.

<p>Pagan Kingdom of Man</p> <p>Based on WORKS</p> <p>Man would save himself through his own ideas</p>	<p>Kingdom of God</p> <p>Based on GRACE</p> <p>God would save man</p>
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Egypt</p> </div> <div style="background-color: black; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Pharaoh is god.</p> </div> <p>He is the ultimate authority and he determines what is right and what is wrong.</p> <div style="background-color: black; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Pharaoh and his government are the saviour.</p> </div> <p>Egypt perverted the divine institution of civil government and made the government all-powerful. People depended on the government for human welfare, order and meaning in life. The Egyptians believed they lived in perfect security if the Pharaoh, as the “state” or nation, was all-powerful.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Exodus</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #c49a3d; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Yahweh alone is God.</p> </div> <p>Yahweh is the ultimate authority, source of truth and righteousness. He is the One in control. Pharaoh either as man, god or state, has no control over anything that happens. All creation, nature and man, must submit to Yahweh.</p> <div style="background-color: #c49a3d; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Yahweh alone is the Saviour.</p> </div> <p>God gave the divine institution of civil government to limit evil. Civil government was to punish people who murdered or broke the laws. Government was never meant to be a “saviour” nor was it meant to be all-powerful. People were supposed to look to God, not the government, for their welfare, order and meaning in life. Man’s security comes from having a relationship with God, who is Lord of all.</p>

Earlier, God rejected the paganised and proud Tower of Babel civilisation because it was entirely based on man’s own ideas with mankind as the ultimate authority. So He called Abraham out from that pagan society.

In the Exodus event, Egypt also represents the Kingdom of Man. The system of leadership and government is based entirely on man’s own ideas with mankind as the ultimate authority. God once again rejects this Kingdom of Man by calling the Israelites out to separate themselves.



3. God's grace is necessary for salvation and redemption. Man can do nothing but respond.

Another lesson God taught through the Exodus account is that His grace is critical. Even though the Israelites cried to Yahweh for help from their slavery, they were not a cooperative lot. They still clung to a strange sense of security from being slaves in Egypt. They refused to listen to God who was going to save them.

Exodus 6:9

So Moses told the people of Israel what the LORD had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery.

Not only that, the Bible makes it very clear that even while in Egypt, despite the segregated society, the Israelites chose to worship the Egyptian idols instead of Yahweh! This is what Yahweh said to the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 20:5–7

⁵ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: When I chose Israel—when I revealed myself to the descendants of Jacob in Egypt—I took a solemn oath that I, the LORD, would be their God. ⁶ I took a solemn oath that day that I would bring them out of Egypt to a land I had discovered and explored for them—a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the best of all lands anywhere.

⁷ Then I said to them, 'Each of you, get rid of the vile images you are so obsessed with. Do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt, for I am the LORD your God.'

Collectively, while in Egypt, the Israelites were not even worshipping Yahweh who had preserved their lives!



Why did God bother to even save them? Because at a national level, He had elected them for a purpose, and also because of His covenant with Abraham. God was committed to working with this reluctant nation.

They themselves had to witness all the miraculous things that God did through the plagues before they would even trust Moses and God. It was only because of God's grace that the Israelites were saved from Egypt. The people did nothing to deserve being saved. This reminds us that salvation has to be a work of God's grace.

God performed two mighty works in the Exodus event. He judged Egypt with a terrible judgment and He saved the Israelites. In all this, the people only had to respond to what God was doing for them.

Exodus: A picture of Judgment and Salvation

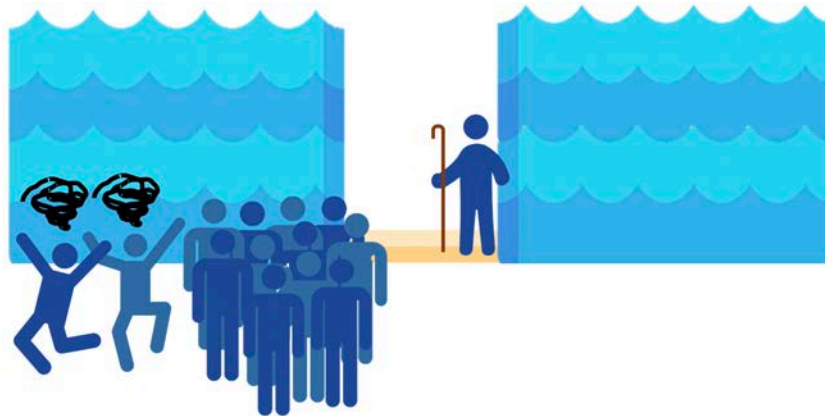


God judged Egypt



God saved Israel

This is best seen in the incident at the Red Sea. With the sea on one side and Pharaoh's army approaching on the other, the people were trapped and afraid that they would all die. Moses told them there was nothing they could do to save themselves. But Yahweh could.



In the midst of their fear and reluctance, the nation decided to trust God. And Yahweh saved them.

Exodus 14:13–14

¹³ But Moses told the people, “Don’t be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. ¹⁴ The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.”

The Exodus event showed the world that God is a promise keeper. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob keeps His covenant by intervening in history in order to fulfil His promises.

God won the war. But more importantly, God was teaching the Israelites, the Egyptians, as well as everyone in the world that He is Yahweh, the Creator-God of the universe.

Years later, a non-Israelite woman named Rahab described to the Israelites how the other people groups felt.

Joshua 2:9–11

⁹ “I know the LORD has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed.

¹¹ No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

How the Exodus Ended: Yahweh Crushed the Egyptians

The Exodus ended very badly for the Egyptians.

- **Death:** There was not a single household in Egypt where someone had not died (Exodus 12:29–30). And Pharaoh and his entire army were killed (Exodus 14:26–28).
- **Poverty:** The Egyptians lost all their wealth. God caused the Egyptians to give all their gold and silver to the Israelites. It was as if God was redistributing the wealth by taking the money from the rich Egyptians and “paying” the Israelites for all their years of unpaid slave labour (Exodus 11:2–3, 12:35–36)!
- **Ruined economy:** The economy of Egypt was utterly ruined. All the crops and livestock were destroyed. People had no more work and no more income.
- **Destroyed military:** The army of Egypt ended up at the bottom of the Red Sea. Their military power was wiped out in a single day.



Egypt's government, economy and military were so badly destroyed that it disappeared from Bible history. There is no further mention of Egypt as a superpower until 500 years later, during the time of King Solomon.

Is it true that with the right government and the right programmes, man can be happy, fulfilled and find meaning in life within a well-ordered society?

Some people believe that with good civil leaders, strong education, social welfare, healthcare, law enforcement and employment programmes, mankind can create a well-ordered society that provides a good life, peace with one another, and a meaningful existence for everyone. In their arrogance, people believe they can overcome the problems of sin and evil with a good government. In other words, a good government can be mankind's saviour.



But man's sin nature corrupts any government and its best programmes, and man's society will ultimately not be successful. Because of sin, there will always be strife, conflict and unhappiness in man-created systems. We have seen the failures of man's many government systems: monarchies, feudalism, empires, caste systems, communism, republics and democracies.

Additionally, what people fail to recognise is that mankind is not at peace with the Creator-God of the universe. Rather, they are enemies of God and will be held accountable for their actions.

Regardless of how successful man is on earth, man remains fallen and separated from God in life and in death.

Our world today is much like Egypt's Kingdom of Man:

- As individuals, each person believes he or she is the ultimate authority and can determine right and wrong. In their vain attempt to create a "good life", people distract themselves with "life in Egypt" or life in the busy modern world.

 Pagan Kingdom of Man Based on WORKS Man would save himself through his own ideas	Kingdom of God Based on GRACE God would save man 
I am my own person, not accountable to anyone. Truth is whatever I make it. I generate my own law. I generate my own ethics. I do what is right in my own eyes.	I am a creature who is responsible to my Creator. I look to my Creator, a person, for the truth. He is the source of all truth. God defines what I do. God gives the rules. He gives my life meaning.

- As a state, people rely on the government to help them be successful in life. They demand prosperity, healthcare, a crime-free society, a clean environment, full

employment and anything else that will ease the challenges of life. They feel they are entitled to these things and if the government fails to deliver, they will vote in another that can. They rely on the state to solve their problems. The state becomes their saviour.





The reality is that a “good life” is unachievable without God and His salvation. Just as the Israelites could do nothing to save themselves from Pharaoh, slavery, the plagues and possible death at the Red Sea, people can do nothing to save themselves.

Despite our arrogance, we cannot create a perfect society with the perfect government to save ourselves. We cannot give our own lives true meaning. And we cannot save ourselves from eternal death. It will be entirely God’s work to save man. All man needs to do is to respond to His call and His invitation to trust Him rather than rely on man-made societies and systems.

Clash of Kingdoms

Like Babel, the Exodus event is a clash between two kingdoms and two systems of beliefs. On one side is the Kingdom of Man, that is convinced that man’s ideas and ways are able to save mankind. On the other side is Yahweh, the Creator-God, who shows love and mercy to those who will change their minds and trust Him; and who also shows wrath and judgment on those who remain evil and reject Him. The Exodus is another picture of God’s future, global and final judgment on the Kingdom of Man.

It is a reminder that in our own lives, the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God are also at war in us. Who do we submit to? Who will be our ultimate authority? Each day of our lives, we face the same choice that the Israelites and the Egyptians did: Will we trust in what Yahweh, the Creator-God says, or will we trust our own thinking and devise our own ways to deal with life?

<p align="center">Pagan Kingdom of Man</p> <p align="center">Based on WORKS Man would save himself through his own ideas</p>	<p align="center">Kingdom of God</p> <p align="center">Based on GRACE God would save man</p>
Election	
<p align="center">  Babel </p> <p align="center">  Egypt </p>	<p align="center">  God chose Abraham </p> <p align="center">  God saved Israel </p>
Trust in: finite, sinful man	Trust in: Infinite, Righteous, Sovereign God

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. Abraham's descendants had a very chaotic and troubled family life. What do you think were the causes of this family slowly losing its closeness to God? How can we prevent the same problems in our lives and in the lives of our family members?
2. Only under the most difficult circumstances did Israel show faith in God. Why do you think God continued to be faithful to such a sinful, reluctant nation? How does their example help you to think of how God works in your life?
3. If the Exodus teaches us that no government can be the saviour of its people, then how should we think about our own government? Should we continue to support its programmes? Should we give up on government? Should we be active in influencing government policies and programmes?



Pre-reading for next lesson: Exodus 12–15