

Date : 14 May 2023
Theme : Understanding the journey of faith in Exodus
Topic : Raising a covenantal community
Key passage : *Exodus 1 - 18*
Key verse : *Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the Lord, I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land...I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord. Exodus 6:6 – 8*

Introduction

Exodus (= way out) is the departure of the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan (Promised land) and the makings of a covenantal community. When there was no way out of Egypt, God was their only way out.

- **When**

From 1875BC, (arrival of Jacob in Egypt) to about 1445BC (erection of the tabernacle), 431 years later in the wilderness.

- **Situation**

This story actually hinges on the promise God had made to Abraham 430 years earlier.

In **Genesis**, a covenant-making God had promised Abraham and renewed with Isaac and Jacob, to make them a great nation with a specified land.

In **Exodus**, God had fulfilled the first part of His promise – from one man, Abraham, a nation had come forth. A covenant-keeping God now would set out, to fulfil His promise to lead them from Egypt to the Promised land.

- Pharaoh would not let them go without a fight. But God had a purpose in raising up Pharaoh ... *But I (God) have raised you (Pharaoh) up for this very purpose, that I might show you My power and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the earth... Exodus 9:16.*

This shows God was in absolute control of Pharaoh as well as Israel's future.

How does Exodus inform us of our faith journey?

Exodus speaks of our spiritual journey of deliverance from the bondage of sin to becoming God's people; a picture of the faith journey every traveller has to make with God.

The focus today on **What do the first three phases of the spiritual journey look like** will help those attending the Spiritual Formation Membership class to understand the early phases of their spiritual journey and for us to know God's expectations of a covenantal community.

What can we learn from Exodus 1 – 18? Overview of the journey of faith (see graphic overview)

1. God delivers a people from the penalty and power of sin's slavery (Phases 1, 2)

2. God disciplines His redeemed people to choose faith through testings. (Phase 3)

How does God relate to those who are His own?

He gives us opportunities in life that He does not give to other people.

These opportunities become tests. Will we trust God's Word and wisdom or will we whine for the things which seem good to us and complain against Him and His appointed leaders?

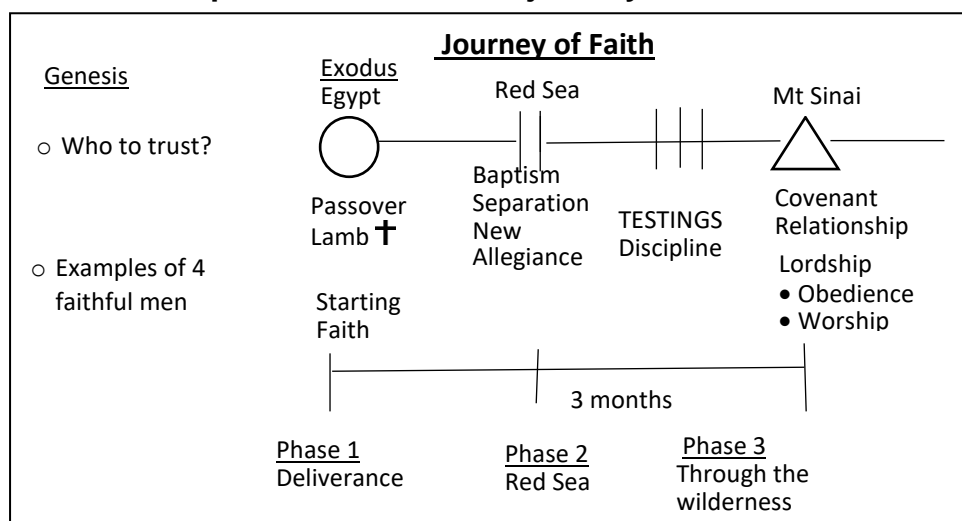
What does it look like for the Lord to test His people?

God does not give additional obstacles, rather the dangers of the wilderness create an environment for us to choose the Lord's way out.

3. God directs His covenantal people to live in covenanted relationship with their leaders.

Commands for how the people will live with God and with one another.

Graphic overview of the journey of faith



1. God delivers a people from the penalty and power of sin's slavery (Phases 1, 2)

Phase 1. Going out faith – Bondage and deliverance *Exodus 1 – 12*

The Passover Lamb – Way out for sin.

- Egypt, in the Bible, represents the place of slavery and bondage. Pharaoh had an iron-clad hold on the entire nation of Israel. There was no way out until God with His covenant partner Moses, provided the way out.
 - i) The sacrifice of the Passover Lamb.
 - Passover was the night the angel of death would enter every home to kill the first born but would *passover* homes in which the blood of a lamb was applied on their door posts and lintels. The sacrifice of the Passover lamb was a prophetic act foreshadowing Jesus who, 1,500 years later, would be the Lamb of God to take away our sins.
- Behind the scenes, in the spiritual realm, God unleashed His mighty army
...Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt... Exodus 12:42

Phase 2. Going on faith – Crossing the sea *Exodus 13 – 14*

The Baptism – Separation from sin to Allegiance to God.

On the third day, after departing from their homes they camped on the shores of the Red Sea.

When the Israelites departed Egypt, they demonstrated going out faith. *Exodus 14:8*

When they saw the Egyptian army they panicked with fear and lacked going on faith. *Exodus 14:10*

- How were they to be delivered from the fury of Egyptian might?
 God had said to Moses...*move on...Raise your staff...stretch your hand... Exodus 14:16.*
 As a covenant partner with God *Exodus 14:21, 22*, Moses obeyed *Exodus 14:21*.
 An east wind divided the sea and a stretch of dry sea bed appeared *Exodus 14: 21, 22*.
 - God provided light for the Israelites for the night crossing but held back the Egyptian army from advancing in the dark. *Exodus 14:19-20*
 - God instructed Moses to close the gap in the sea when the Israelites completed the crossing. God and Moses worked in partnership in this Red Sea crossing miracle.
- **What connection has the Red Sea crossing with our water baptism?**
 In *1 Corinthians 10:1-4*, Paul gives an interpretation of the Red Sea crossing as connected to our baptism in Christ Himself.
 The connection between the Red Sea and baptism is obviously water and the fact that the Israelites were not fully delivered until they departed from Egypt as they crossed the Red Sea.
 - Is baptism necessary for our salvation?
 Baptism is a sign of faith and obedience to Christ's command.
 It is in baptism that remission of sins and the Holy Spirit are received *Acts 2:38*
 We are children of God by faith because we are baptised. *Galatians 3:26, 27*

- Is it necessary to belong to a community as I am being saved?
For survival. Once they crossed the Red Sea, they had only one choice – to unite under Moses' leadership. Turning back to Egypt was no longer an option. Unfortunately, though they had left Egypt, *Egypt* had not left them. They would soon relish their fondness of *Egypt* (= good old days).
God's part was to get them out of Egypt, their part was to get *Egypt* out of their hearts.
- Baptism, both of water and the Holy Spirit, are intertwined in the process of our salvation.
...no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit... John 3:5

2. God disciplines His redeemed people to choose faith through testings. (Phase 3)

a) They were tested over lack of resources (Day 3 water supply was gone) *Exodus 15:25*

1st, 2nd complains No water / bitter water *Exodus 15:21, 23*

Outcome of test – failed (persistent grumbling, complaint against leadership *Exodus 15:24*)

God's teaching moment on His covenantal relationship

How to live with God in our midst

- To trust the Lord who heals = *Jehovah Rapha Exodus 15:26*.
God brought the Israelites to go for three days without water in the desert and then brought them to a supply of water that was undrinkable. He was testing them, revealing their lack of going on faith. He then 'healed' the water, making it fit for drinking.
- Healing is conditional upon obedience
...if you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His eyes. If you pay attention to His command, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you... Exodus 15:26
- Protection from diseases
- Provision for healing

Failure to give thanks for abundance *Exodus 15:27*

Elim (Oasis = blessing of abundance but no record of thankfulness)

b) 3rd complain (Day 30th) No meat *Exodus 16:12, 13*

When God supplied abundance of meat, they gobbled it up without regard to the Giver.

When God supplied the food, He set conditions but the people refused to follow His instructions.

He had said He was testing them.

On Saturday, He instructed them to collect 2 portions (No supply on 7th day)

Outcome of test – Disobedience... *some of them paid no attention to Moses... Exodus 16:20*

Repeatedly they ignored Moses' instructions, but expected Moses to meet their demands.

Was God happy about this?

c) 4th complain – No bread, their next complain *Exodus 16:13, 14*

God sent manna. It was nutritious food but they quickly started complaining again.

What do you think was God's response?

God's teaching moment on His covenantal relationship.

- To keep the Sabbath as a sign of covenantal relationship.
...a holy Sabbath... Exodus 16:23 (first usage)
 - God's provision would be sufficient to cover the needs of the 7th day *Exodus 16:25, 26*
 - Principle of working 6 days so as to observe Sabbath rest
 - Violation of God's Sabbath demonstrates rebellion and ingratitude *Exodus 16:27-31*
- Christians today say we don't have to live under the Sabbath regulations anymore. But observing the Sabbath is a sign of covenantal relationship.
...This will be a sign between Me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy... Exodus 31:13
Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you Exodus 31:14

- So, we devote Sunday to worship God, feed on His Word and to Christian fellowship. Of course, there are other things which seem more urgent than observing the Lord's day. Do you think we can prosper by using the Lord's day for ourselves instead of observing this sign of our covenantal relationship?

d) 5th complain – No water supply again *Exodus 17:1*

Outcome of test: Entitlement mentality exposed

...why quarrel with me?... why do you put the Lord to the test?...Exodus 17:2

- Why does scripture teach that people, who complain against the leader, has a problem with the Lordship of Christ?
- In this time of difficulty, Israelites' great sin – doubted the presence and provision of God among them *...Is the Lord among us or not... Exodus 17:7*. If the Israelites could not even trust God for basic needs, what kind of going on faith did they have?
- Example, Paul knew he could rely on God who would never let him down, when he said: *...My God shall supply all (including financial) your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4L:19 (KJV)*

e) Test 6. The first battle against Amalekites at Rephidim *Exodus 17:8-13*

- Victory through covenantal partnership
 - Joshua fought the enemy
 - Moses, Aaron and Hur interceded
 - God gave the victory! The Lord is my Banner = *Jehovah Nissi Exodus 17:16*

3. God directs His covenantal people to live in covenantal relationship with their leaders.

Exodus 18

A Godly community requires members to take on leadership roles.

- The need for able leaders to serve with Moses. *Exodus 18*
- Moses wisely appointed leaders *Exodus 18: 21 - 26*
These leaders were subject to Moses, not on par with him. Unfortunately, in the months ahead, many of them began to challenge Moses and Aaron's leadership which led to serious consequences.

Application

1. *Exodus* gives us sign posts for going out and going on faith.

a) In relation to going out faith, have you bypassed (ignored) the sign post of baptism?

b) In relation to Sabbath keeping (as a sign of our relationship with God),

what is your response to *Exodus 31:13*?

What is your current difficulty in keeping Sunday holy unto the Lord?

2. In your going on faith, how are you dealing with the problem of:

- basic needs / money
- on health issues
- complaining against God or leaders if this is an issue in your life.