

Our Journey of Transformation #1: Exodus 1–14

More to the Story

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Introduction

This week we begin a five-week study of the middle ‘third’ of the book of Exodus. The book as a whole can be divided into three parts:

- Exodus 1–14 God rescues the Israelites from slavery in Egypt
- Exodus 15–24 God transforms the Israelites into his chosen people
- Exodus 25–40 God prepares to dwell in the midst of his transformed people

As we come to consider Exodus 15–24 and the way God transforms his people, we reflect on the story so far. What is the background to this transformation?

Review

A memorable phrase might help you to remember the point of this week: How do the 64 chapters of the Bible story so far help to prepare us for the remaining 64 books of the Bible?

Can you map out the major steps in the Bible story so far (Genesis 1 – Exodus 14)? What has God done, and with whom, and why?

More to the Story

It’s common for us to pick out our favourite Bible stories. We do it with children (and many of us have learned the Old Testament through children’s programs). We do it with our personal Bible reading and our Old Testament ‘heroes’. And we sometimes can end up with a collection of pieces from a jigsaw puzzle – but with a limited sense of how these pieces fit together into the overall picture or story of the Bible.

Exodus 15–24 shines the spotlight on an important ‘next step’ in the Bible’s overall story. Here are some of the steps or pieces that lead up to the middle of Exodus. Are you familiar with them all?

- Genesis 1–2 God creates the world, and it is ‘very good’
- Genesis 3–11 humans rebel against God, progressively getting worse
- Genesis 12–24 God starts to rescue the world, starting with one man: Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1–3. What does God ask Abraham (here going by his former name, Abram) to do? What does God promise to Abraham? What does God intend will be the result?

- Genesis 25–26 Abraham’s miracle son, Isaac, continues the family
- Genesis 27–36 Isaac’s son, Jacob, becomes the father of twelve sons after whom the twelve tribes of Israel are named
- Genesis 37–50 God blesses his people – and the people of Egypt and of other nations – when Jacob’s eleventh son Joseph navigates a worldwide famine
- Exodus 1–2 Jacob’s descendants flourish in Egypt, so the Egyptians enslave them
- Exodus 3–6 God commissions Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh to release Israel
- Exodus 7–12 God sends ten plagues to challenge the power of Pharaoh...
- Exodus 13–14 ...culminating in the exodus out of Egypt and rescue through the Red Sea

Even during the events of Exodus so far, have you noticed that God is continuing to honour his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3? Through Abraham's family, all the families of the earth are able to find blessing in Israel's God. For example:

- In Exodus 9:20–21, some of Pharaoh's officials decide to 'fear' the word of the LORD rather than to ignore it. Their flocks survive the plague of hail.
- In Exodus 12:38, members of many nations join Israel in leaving Egypt. The Holman Christian Standard Bible helpfully describes them as 'an ethnically diverse crowd'.
- Even the Passover meal – which becomes *the* major commemorative festival in Israel and marks the first month of their calendar – makes provision for these non-Israelites to join with the people of God in celebrating God's rescue (12:48–49).

In light of all this, review God's final rescue in the exodus from Egypt and his rescue through the Red Sea. Read (or skim) through Exodus 12–14. How does Israel respond to the rescue?

The key words in the last two verses (14:30–31) pick up key terms that recur throughout the rest of the Bible, even into New Testament salvation. We find that 'the LORD *saved* Israel' and, in response, they '*feared* the LORD and *put their trust* in him (and Moses)'. At every stage of the Bible's story, God is willing to 'save' people, and they are invited to 'trust' him.

Looking Back

Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, God's people are invited to look back to this definitive moment of salvation. Why do you think this is? What do we Christians look back to as our definitive moment of salvation – and why should we look back?

Looking Forward

God has invited Abraham and his Israelite descendants to join the people of God. They're to be transformed not primarily for their own benefit, but so that all the families of the earth might find blessing. Can you think of more of the important steps that take place in God's story as the Old Testament unfolds?

As we reach the New Testament and the part of the story where we start to fit in, consider the following questions:

- *How has God's New Testament story unfolded so far?*
- *Which parts of that story are still yet to come to pass?*
- *What role do you think GWAC has to play in that story?*
- *How is God gifting you to contribute to GWAC's role?*

Given we share in God's quest together, share your answers to these questions with someone.