

What Happened Next?

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Exodus and Exodus chapter 1.

Exodus chapter 1, and we'll read again from the beginning. These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. All the descendants of Jacob were 70 Persians.

Joseph was already in Egypt. Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly. They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. There arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph.

[1 : 14] When I was young, one of my favorite TV programs was the BBC Sports Quiz, A Question of Sport.

I'm sure you've probably watched it before. But what I didn't realize was that, I didn't realize it until recently, was that A Question of Sport has been on our TV screens for the past 50 years. It's the world's longest-running TV sports quiz, and it began back in January 1970, long before I was born. But as you'd expect, since then, there have been lots of changes to the program. There have been new presenters, different presenters, also different team captains. But I always remember watching it when it was presented by Sue Barker with my footballing hero, Ali McCoy and Matt Dawson. But, you know, when watching A Question of Sport, there's always different quiz rounds in the program. And my favorite quiz round was, what happened next?

What happened next? Where they'd show a video of a particular sport, and they'd show only part of it, and then they would pause it halfway, and something unusual was going to happen.

[2 : 27] It wasn't going to be the norm. And all the contestants, they would have to try and work out what happened next. What happened next? And, you know, thinking about coming to the end of our study in the life of Joseph, we finished it last Lord's Day.

And as I began preparing for this Lord's Day, I realized, I was just thinking, well, I really enjoyed studying the life of Joseph with you, and seeing how the Lord had worked in Joseph's life, and how the Lord used Joseph for his glory.

But I don't know about you, when I concluded that study on the life of Joseph, it left me with that same question. What happened next? What happened next? Because, as you know, the death of Joseph, it's not the end of the story of redemption.

In fact, the death of Joseph was only the beginning of the story of redemption. Which is why I want us to see this morning what happened next.

And I want us to follow the story into the book of Exodus, and see what happened next. And this morning, I'd like us just to consider this opening chapter under three headings.

[3 : 37] The silence of God, the slavery of Pharaoh, and the sentence of death. Three headings. The silence of God, the slavery of Pharaoh, and the sentence of death.

These headings, they tell us what happened next. So first of all, the silence of God. The silence of God. We read in verse 6, Now these opening verses in the book of Exodus, they summarize for us what took place over a 430-year period.

As we know from our study of the life of Joseph, Joseph was someone who was seized by his brothers, he was separated from his family, and he was sold into slavery in Egypt. And even though Joseph's brothers meant evil against him, as we saw last Lord's Day, the Lord meant it for good.

It was all part of the Lord's perfect plan, and path, and purpose, and even the providence in his life. Joseph was sent into Egypt in order to prepare, and preserve, and protect, and even provide for his family during the famine.

But when the famine was over, Jacob's family didn't return to the promised land of Canaan. Instead, they settled in the land of Egypt.

[5 : 15] And as we read, that entire generation died in Egypt. They all went the way of mankind. The wages of sin is death. And we're told that at least three generations of the Israelites died in Egypt, which means that there was probably a graveyard of Jacob's descendants buried in Egypt.

And yet what we read in verse 7 is that the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly. They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

And what we're being told there is that despite the power of death and the passing of time, the promise of blessing continued to be fulfilled. Despite the power of death and the passing of time, the promise of blessing continued to be fulfilled.

Now, verse 7 is actually a key verse in this chapter. And it's an important verse because it has key words, such as fruitful, multiplied, and filled.

Fruitful, multiplied, and filled. And of course, they're key words because they're meant to bring us right back to the very beginning, to the Garden of Eden. Because you remember in the Garden of Eden that the Lord commanded Adam to be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth.

[6 : 39] And the same command was given to Noah, be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth. And it was also the covenant promise that was given to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob, and all his descendants after him.

He said, I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply in the earth. And you know, that's what happened. The Lord was faithful to his covenant promise, because despite the power of death, and the passing of time, the promise of blessing continued to be fulfilled.

In fact, it's estimated that from the 70 people in Jacob's family that came into Egypt, there were over 2 million that left Egypt at the Exodus.

It was mass growth of one family. And what's incredible is that God was sovereignly working out his perfect plan and purpose, even in the silence.

God was sovereignly working out his perfect plan and purpose, even in the silence. And I say that because over 400 years have now passed.

[7 : 53] 400 years have now passed since Jacob's family first entered Egypt. But during that 400-year period, there was no prophetic word from the Lord.

There were no covenant assurances given. There were no covenant reassurances given. There was nothing but silence. Nothing but silence. And yet what we're seeing is that God was sovereignly but silently working in the lives of his people.

Because despite the power of death and the passing of time, the promise of blessing continued to be fulfilled. Now, unfortunately, the descendants of Jacob or the children of Israel, as they became known, they wrongly assumed that the silence of God meant separation from God.

Some of them might have said that God was sleeping. But as you know, my friend, our sovereign God, he neither slumbers nor sleeps. And you're maybe looking at your own life today.

Maybe you think that God is silent in your life today. Because, well, you might think, well, he's not speaking to me the way he once did. His word, I don't feel the power of his word like I did before.

[9 : 03] I don't feel the presence of God in worship like I did before. And like the Israelites did, maybe you think this morning that the Lord has abandoned you or left you or forsaken you.

But, you know, my friend, as it was for those in the past, we are called to trust in the promises of God and we're to trust in the providence of God.

Because although he may be silent, he's not slumbering and he's not sleeping. He's sovereignly working out his plans and purposes in the lives of his people.

And, you know, we see that throughout the history of God's people, don't we? Because there was another period in history when God was working sovereignly, but silently.

As you know, the last book in the Old Testament is the book of Malachi. And the first book in the New Testament is the book of Matthew or the Gospel of Matthew. And for us, going from Malachi to Matthew, it's just as easy as turning a page.

[10:09] But just like it took 400 years to turn the page from Genesis to Exodus, it also took 400 years to turn the page from Malachi to Matthew.

And that 400-year period from the end of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament, it's known as the intertestamental period. And just like this 400-year period between Genesis and Exodus, the intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew, it was a 400-year period where there was no prophecy.

And there was no proclamation from the Lord. There was no message of thus saith the Lord. There were no prophets. There were no promises of blessing or signs of glory.

There was just silence. God was silent. And yet God was sovereignly, but silently, working out His plans and purposes in the lives of His people.

Because despite the power of death and the passing of time, the promise of blessing continued to be fulfilled. And the promise was fulfilled. And it was fulfilled in the New Testament.

[11:16] The first thing Matthew tells us, Jesus is here. And Matthew goes on to tell us about the life and the death and the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ.

And you know, my friend, that has been the case throughout history. Yes, there have been spectacular moments of God's sovereignty where God has seen and God has heard. Just like the Exodus, where God has seen there and He's heard there.

The incarnation, God has seen, God has heard. The growth of the early church, God has seen, God has heard. The Reformation with Martin Luther and John Calvin and all these reformers, the Great Awakening with Jonathan Edwards, the revivals with people like Duncan Campbell and all the many other people who were involved, even in our own communities.

There have been spectacular moments of God's sovereignty throughout history, but there have also been silent moments of God's sovereignty throughout history.

There have been silent moments of God's sovereignty throughout history. You know, even if we were to consider the past 18 months during this coronavirus pandemic, for the first time in its history, this building, this pulpit was silent on the Lord's Day.

[12:36] Nothing was said from it because we closed our doors to the public worship of God. For a time, we even didn't sing in church. We were silenced.

We were moved to online services. And at the time, we were so thankful for such a provision, and we still are. But, you know, some people thought that we would emerge from the pandemic with a revival and restoration and renewal.

But at the moment, it's more like regression and relapse with so few returning to public worship and so many preferring to stay at home in their slippers.

And there's no doubt that church isn't the way it was. We will all say that. Church is not the way it was. But, you know, my greatest fear and the fear of other ministers is that it's producing distant and disconnected disciples.

And, you know, you speak to other ministers. I've heard ministers who are on the verge of giving up completely because their congregation isn't coming back. And, you know, it's creating an attitude of apathy.

[13:49] It's creating this consumerist Christianity. Give me. Or even a couch potato Christianity. And, you know, I want to say to those who are watching at home this morning, livestream is not a substitute for public worship.

It never was and it never will be. Livestream is not a substitute for public worship. Livestream is to support those who genuinely cannot come.

And there are many people and we know them and they genuinely cannot, some cases, they should not come. And that's okay. But the livestream is not a support for those who are out everywhere else during the week but living in lockdown on the Lord's Day.

And, you know, my friend, I cannot dictate to you what to do. I just pray along with other many ministers and elders that we will see this provision, a provision that was removed from us for many months.

We will see this provision and this privilege, this blessing and this benefit of gathering together for public worship. the writer to the Hebrew says, do not neglect the gathering together of the saints.

[15:06] And, you know, so many people ask me, and I mentioned this before, they ask, what is God saying to us in this pandemic? What is God saying to us through this pandemic? And yet, no one knows because maybe like it was in the past, God is silent.

God seems to be silent. But, my friend, let's not make the mistake of thinking that the silence of God means that he's slumbering or sleeping.

No, like he was in Israel's day, like he was in the intertestamental period, he is sovereignly working out his plans and purposes in the lives of his people.

He is sovereignly working out his plans and purposes in the lives of his people. And so, as we consider what happened next, we see the silence of God. But then, secondly, the slavery of Pharaoh.

The slavery of Pharaoh. So, the silence of God and the slavery of Pharaoh. Look at verse 8. Now, there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

[16:18] Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land. Therefore, they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.

They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Ramses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad, and the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

And in these verses, we see that in the silence of God, there was the slavery of Pharaoh. In the silence of God, there was the slavery of Pharaoh. And as you'd expect, the children of Israel they thought that Pharaoh's slavery and God's silence, that through it all, God had separated himself from his people, and that God had somehow abandoned his people in Egypt.

But as we said, God was sovereignly but silently at work in the lives of his people, because despite the power of death and the passing of time, the promise of blessing was being fulfilled.

fulfilled. And it was being fulfilled because as we've read through this narrative, the Israelites were many, they were mighty, and they were multiplying. The Israelites were many, they were mighty, and they were multiplying.

[17:36] But here's the point. They had made a mistake. They were many, mighty, and multiplying, but they had made a mistake. And their mistake was that they had stayed and settled in the land of Egypt.

In fact, that's why there was the silence of God and the slavery of Pharaoh, because the Israelites had stayed and settled in the land of Egypt. As you know, the land of Egypt, it wasn't the land that was promised to the patriarchs, who were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The land that was promised, the promised land was the land of Canaan. That was the land that Jacob had left behind when he traveled 500 miles into Egypt with his family during the famine. Now, as we said earlier, Joseph, he was seized and separated and sold into slavery in Egypt according to the Lord's perfect plan and purpose. But you'll remember when we studied the life of Joseph that Pharaoh had disturbing dreams where he prophesied that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of poverty.

And it was during those seven years of poverty that Jacob's family, they migrated those 500 miles from the promised land into the land of Egypt. But when the famine was over, it was only seven years, when the famine was over, they stayed.

[19:10] They settled. When things returned to a level of normality, they didn't return to the promised land of Canaan. Instead, they stayed and they settled in the land of Egypt.

But that's not why Joseph sent, he was sent into, that's not why the Lord sent Joseph into Egypt. The Lord sent Joseph into Egypt in order to prepare and preserve and protect and provide for his family during the famine.

famine. Joseph wasn't sent into Egypt, my friends, so that his family would stay and settle in Egypt. That was never part of the promise.

Because the promised land wasn't the land of Egypt. The promised land was the land of Canaan. That was the promised land. But instead of returning with his family after the famine, as we read in the narrative, in Joseph's life, Jacob remained in Egypt.

He stayed and he settled in the land of Egypt until he died. And when he died, one generation passed away, the other came up behind him, one generation passed away, and that continued for over 400 years.

[20:23] And by that point, the Israelites had stayed and settled in the land of Egypt for so long that the promised land of Canaan had slipped their mind.

They had stayed and settled in the land of Egypt for so long that the promised land of Canaan had slipped their mind. And you know, my friend, that's why there was silence from God and slavery from Pharaoh, because the Israelites had stayed and settled in the land of Egypt while the promise of God slipped their mind.

You know, one commentator, he said the lesson of Exodus chapter 1 is that being a comfortable Christian is not our calling.

Being a comfortable Christian is not our calling. Yes, the Israelites were many, they were mighty, they were multiplying, but they had made a mistake.

They had stayed, they had settled in the land of Egypt, and the promise of God had slipped their mind. And you know, my Christian friend, it speaks to me, but I hope and pray that it speaks to you as well, because it's such a warning to us that we have not been called and commissioned to a casual and comfortable Christianity.

[21 : 46] We have not been called and commissioned to a casual and comfortable Christianity. No, Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me. So it's not casual, it's not comfortable.

And like, you know, like the Israelites, you look at their experience and you think about our own experience. We had a phase of famine. We had a period of poverty when the church was closed for months.

But now things have returned, just like it returned for them. It's returned to a level of normality. But people haven't returned.

Instead, they've stayed at home. They've settled into their Sunday routine, which is so easy to get into. They've stayed at home. They've settled into their Sunday routine, and the promise of God has slipped their mind.

And what's the promise of God? Yes, He's everywhere, but He promises where two or three gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

[22 : 51] My friend, the lesson of Exodus chapter 1 is that being a comfortable Christian is not our calling. Being a comfortable Christian is not our calling.

And so what does God do with His people now that they've stayed and now that they've settled in the land of Egypt and this promise, the promise of the promised land has slipped their mind? Well, they first of all experience the silence of God, but then they encounter the slavery of Pharaoh.

The Lord brings oppression to bring about obedience. The Lord brings oppression to bring about obedience. And, you know, this wasn't the only time in history that the Lord used oppression to bring about obedience.

Because we see it in the early church. You see it in the book of Acts, when Jesus, He had called and commissioned and commanded His Christians to be witnesses. And they were to be witnesses. We are to be those same witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth. But in the early church, instead of going to the highways and hedges and compelling people to come in that the master's house may be filled, they stayed and they settled in the city of Jerusalem.

[24 : 05] And they stayed and settled in the city of Jerusalem until the Lord scattered them.

Because the Lord used the oppression of persecution to bring about the obedience of His people.

And when the early church was persecuted, it scattered and they were, they spread, they were sent from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth.

That's how the church grew. And you know, that has been the history of the church down throughout the centuries. The Lord has used the oppression of persecution to bring about the obedience of His people.

Now, I don't know if I've told you this before, but when I was doing my first degree in the Highland Theological College in Dingwall, there was a minister from Nigeria who had, he had encountered and he had experienced persecution firsthand.

So he had encountered and experienced persecution for his faith in Jesus Christ. And one morning he was asked to open in prayer. He was asked to open the lecture in prayer.

[25 : 12] We were all asked different mornings to open up. So this Nigerian minister, he stood up and he said only a few words. Lord, I pray that persecution will come to the West.

Amen. And then he sat down. And, well, there was a stunned silence. Because no one wants to be persecuted for their faith.

No one wants persecution. But, you know, what this Nigerian minister, he was only visiting for the day, what this Nigerian minister could see, that like it was for the Israelites, like it was for the early church, and even from his own experience of persecution in Nigeria, he could see that the oppression of persecution brings about the obedience of God's people.

The oppression of persecution brings about the obedience of God's people. But, you know, when he came to Scotland, he could only see how casual and contented and how comfortable we are as Christians.

Because we've stayed, we've settled. We're not going to the highways and hedges compelling people to come in. Instead, we're slumbering, we're sleeping, and the promises of God have slipped our mind.

[26 : 37] We have an attitude of apathy, and we're becoming discontented and disconnected disciples. And yet, and yet despite it all, this is the wonder of it, that in the midst of persecution and pain, Exodus 1 is reminding us and reassuring us that God is still sovereignly but silently at work in the lives of his people.

But let's not stay. Let's not become settled. Let's not have an attitude of apathy. Let's not become disconnected and discontented disciples.

No, we're to do as the Great Commission is. Go to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that the Master's house may be filled.

It's the Master's house that needs to be filled. And you know, this was true of the Israelites. God was sovereignly but silently at work in their lives because the silence of God and the slavery of Pharaoh, it brought about the sentence of death, which is what we see lastly and briefly.

The sentence of death. So the silence of God, the slavery of Pharaoh, and the sentence of death. Now look at verse 13. It says, So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves, and made their lives bitter with hard service and mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field.

[28 : 11] In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Pua, when you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him.

But if it is a daughter, she shall live. As we said earlier, despite the power of death and the passing of time, the promise of blessing continued to be fulfilled.

And it was fulfilled because much to Pharaoh's displeasure, the Israelites, they were many, they were mighty, and they were multiplying. And Pharaoh had become fed up of them. He was becoming frustrated with them.

But as it progressed, he started fearing them. He feared the Israelites. Which is why he increased pressure on the Israelites by not only introducing a policy of oppression, slavery, making them work hard, but he also introduced another policy, a policy of obliteration.

Not just a policy of oppression, but a policy of obliteration. Because Pharaoh, as we read, he directed the Hebrew midwives to carry out this policy of genocide, infanticide.

[29 : 25] Particularly, infanticide. Infanticide. Infanticide. Now, throughout history, infanticide was usually carried out on disabled or female children. Because they said that males were preferred for their strength.

Nowadays, as you know, the sad reality is that you don't have to wait until a baby is born to kill it. You can do it at 24 weeks. Or if the baby has been diagnosed with Down syndrome, you can kill it at 38 weeks.

You know, I read an article the other day where a mother, she was offered a full-term abortion. Because her baby, she was told her baby was of no value to her.

Because it had Down syndrome. And of course, she disagreed. Hector is now two years old. But you know, that's what we're seeing.

And we see it even here in the book of Exodus. Pharaoh had this paranoid policy of genocide, of infanticide. He wanted to kill all the male babies in order to prevent an army of Israelites rising up against him.

[30 : 35] And it was a step too far. Yes, the Lord had allowed the oppression of his people in order to bring about obedience. But he wouldn't allow the obliteration of his people.

That was too far. Because the Lord had promised his people, as we've seen, the Lord promised his people that he would make them a great nation. He would make them into a great nation and bless them.

But you know, as one commentator stated, he said, No people in recorded history have suffered as the Hebrew people have suffered. But whether it was Pharaoh in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, Stalin in Russia, or Hitler in Germany, every nation or ruler, he says, that has persecuted the Jews has been punished for it.

Which, you know, is a reminder to us that God is long-suffering. But he's not all suffering. God is patient. But he calls us to repentance. But what we see here is that Pharaoh's paranoid policy of infanticide, it was infiltrated by two Hebrew midwives who feared God.

They were called Shiphrah and Pua. And God willing, I'd like us to look at this in more detail next Lord's Day, because it paves the way for the birth of Moses. But just in conclusion this morning, I want us to see that Pharaoh's private or paranoid policy of infanticide, it began privately, but it ended publicly.

[32 : 10] Pharaoh's paranoid policy, it began privately, but ended publicly. We read that the Hebrew midwives had, they had to privately check which sex of the baby it was, which was being born.

And, well, if it was a male, they were to kill it. If it was a female, they would let it live. But when they stood up to Pharaoh and his paranoid policy of infanticide, his paranoid policy went from private to public.

Because they say, we're told in verse 22, Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, every son that is born to the Hebrews, you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.

But what Pharaoh didn't realize was that his sentence of death was going to bring about the salvation of God's people. His sentence of death was going to bring about the salvation of God's people.

And, you know, the way Pharaoh treated the Jews, does it not make you think of the way that the Jews treated Jesus? Because many of the Jews, they began hating Jesus privately.

[33 : 23] They privately plotted to get rid of Jesus. They tried infanticide when Jesus was born.

They had other attempts on his life during his ministry. But when all their private policies, when their private policies were met with resistance, they made all their policies very public.

What did they chant? Crucify him. Crucify him. Crucify him. Get rid of him. And you know, my friend, you look at the book of Exodus and Exodus chapter 1, and we see that as in the days of Moses, so it was in the days of Jesus, the sentence of death brought about the salvation of God's people.

As it was in the days of Moses, so it was in the days of Jesus. The sentence of death brought about the salvation of God's people. Jesus died in order to bring us life.

the promise of eternal life through faith in him. And that's what we need to understand from this story as we go into the next part and see what happened next in the story of redemption.

We need to remember that the sentence of death brought about the salvation of God's people. And so we see this morning the silence of God, the slavery of Pharaoh, and the sentence of death that would ultimately bring about the salvation of God's people, not only from slavery in Egypt, but also from slavery to sin.

[35 : 01] And it would all come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word.

And we give thanks to Thee that even in this silence that Thou art one who is still sovereign, a God who is still working and who promises to work all things together for good to those who are the called according to Thine own purpose.

Help us, Lord, we pray, to trust Thee in this silence, to know that Thou art one who is still there and a God who promises to speak to us even through His Word. O Lord, bless Thy truth to us, we pray. Guide us, we ask. Help us to keep looking to Jesus, to see Him on every page and to know that He is the author and He remains the finisher of our faith.

Go before us and we pray. Bless us in our being together and take away our iniquity and receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing again in Psalm 105.

[36 : 15] Psalm 105 in the Scottish Psalter, page 376 in the Blue Psalm book. Psalm 105.

We're singing from verse 23 down to the verse marked 27. Psalm 105, as you said, this is the, it recounts the history of what happened when Joseph went into Egypt and how they left Egypt.

And at verse 23, it says, the people then of Israel down into Egypt came and Jacob also sojourned within the land of Ham. Now I want you to work out what is the land of Ham and why is it called

that?

And he did greatly by his power increase his people there and stronger than their enemies they by his blessing wear. Their heart he turned to envy, his folk maliciously, with those that his own servants were to deal in subtlety.

His servant Moses he did send, Aaron his chosen one. By these his signs and wonders great in Ham's land were made known. So these verses in conclusion of Psalm 105 to God's praise.

[37 : 34] The people then of Israel down into Egypt came and Jacob also sojourned with him the land of Ham.

And he did greatly by his power increase his people there.

and stronger than their enemies they by his blessing wear.

his love. ingestose way when those that his Storm servants were to deal in subtlety.

His servant forces he descend, thereon his chosen one.

[39 : 49] By these designs a wondrous fate in hands that were made known.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.