

Exodus 2:1-4: A Baby Hidden From Pharaoh

Scriptures for Today:

Exodus 2:1-4 *And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. 2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. 3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. 4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.*

Introduction

We are back in the book of Exodus this morning, and before we get into chapter 2, I want to briefly remind you of how we got to this point.

Back in the book of Genesis, God called a man named Abraham and made him a promise.

Genesis 12:2-3

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation.

Abraham had a son named Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel.

And Israel had twelve sons who would become the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

One of those twelve sons was Joseph.

Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, and Joseph eventually ended up in Egypt.

But God used all of those circumstances for good.

Joseph eventually rose to a position of great authority in Egypt, and God used him to prepare for a terrible famine that was coming upon the land.

Joseph later told his brothers:

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

God used Joseph not only to save his own family from starvation, but to preserve many people during the famine.

Because of that famine, Jacob and his entire household came down into Egypt.

So the family that God had promised would become a great nation was now living in a foreign land.

That is where the book of Exodus begins.

Exodus 1:5

And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

They came into Egypt as a relatively small family.

But God began to fulfill the promise He had made to Abraham.

Exodus 1:7

And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

The family of Jacob was becoming a great nation.

But after Joseph and that generation died, a new king arose over Egypt.

Exodus 1:8

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

This Pharaoh became afraid of how numerous and powerful the children of Israel were becoming, so he tried to weaken them through oppression.

Exodus 1:11

Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens.

But Pharaoh's plan did not work.

Exodus 1:12

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

So Pharaoh became even more wicked.

He commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the male children when they were born.

But look at their response:

Exodus 1:17

But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

The midwives feared God more than they feared Pharaoh.

So when that plan failed, Pharaoh gave an even broader command.

Exodus 1:22

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

That's where chapter 1 ends. Pharaoh has done everything he can to stop the children of Israel from multiplying. He has ordered every Hebrew baby boy to be cast into the river.

From Pharaoh's perspective, he is taking control of the situation.

But he has no idea what God is doing behind the scenes.

While Pharaoh is trying to destroy the next generation of Israel, God is preparing a child who will one day stand before Pharaoh and deliver Israel out of his hand.

That's a reminder for us in our life... God is constantly working in ways that cannot be seen by man.

On the outside we see a horrible situation. A wicked ruler ordering the death of innocent children.

But all the evil that man devises, God turns it upside down and accomplishes amazing things.

We're going to see the beginning of that this morning. We're going to see how God preserves His promises in ways we would never expect. A baby will be hidden from Pharaoh and he will be used in a mighty way. We know that baby is Moses.

There are three truths that I want you to take away from this short passage. Just 4 verses. 3 points.

1. God Can Use a Troubled Past for His Purpose — v. 1

2. Faith Trusts God When the Future Is Uncertain — vv. 2–3

3. God Can Turn Destruction Into Deliverance — vv. 3–4

Let's look at these verses...

1. God Can Use a Troubled Past for His Purpose — v. 1

Exodus 2:1

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

The first detail God gives us about the parents of Moses is that they were both from the tribe of Levi. Later in Exodus we learn their names...

Exodus 6:20 And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years.

So Moses' father was Amram and his mother was Jochebed, and both of them were the descendants of Levi. That is significant in many ways. Who was Levi?

Remember what we just talked about in the introduction.

Abraham had Isaac. Isaac had Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and Israel had 12 sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Levi was one of those twelve sons.

But when we go back and look at Levi's life, there were some serious problems in his past.

Back in Genesis 34, Levi's sister Dinah was defiled by a man named Shechem.

What happened to Dinah was wicked. But Simeon and Levi responded to that wickedness with their own wickedness.

They deceived the men of the city and convinced them to be circumcised.

Then while the men were weak and recovering, Simeon and Levi entered the city and killed them.

Genesis 34:25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

They weren't simply defending their sister. They took revenge into their own hands. They devised a plan, deceived an entire city, and slaughtered the men.

Their father, Jacob, was angry with them because of what they did.

And years later, when Jacob was at the end of his life, he gathered his sons together and told them what would happen to them in the future. Look what he says about Simeon and Levi...

Genesis 49:5-7 Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. **6** O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. **7** Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Jacob uses strong words, "Instruments of cruelty". "Their anger was fierce, their wrath was cruel" Then he says "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel"

So when we go back to Exodus 2, when it tells us that this man and women were both from the house of Levi, understand the history connected to that name.

This was not a tribe that started out with some perfect record. Their forefather had been known for uncontrolled anger, violence, cruelty... But God wasn't finished with Levi.

Later in the book of Exodus, when Moses comes down from Mount Sinai and finds Israel worshipping a golden calf, he stands in the gate of the camp and asks a question:

Exodus 32:26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the LORD'S side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Notice who responded. **"All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him."**

The descendants of the man who had once acted according to his own anger and self-will now stood up and identified themselves with the LORD. And later God sets this tribe apart for His service...

Deuteronomy 10:8 At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.

Think about that transformation. Levi had been associated with instruments of cruelty. Now his descendants would carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

Levi had acted in uncontrolled anger. Now his descendants would be separated to minister before God. And remember what Jacob had said: **"I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."**

The Levites would eventually be scattered throughout Israel. They did not receive one large tribal territory like many of the other tribes. Instead, God placed them in cities throughout the land where they would serve among the people.

God did not erase the consequences of Levi's past, but He took what had been connected with judgment and used it for His purpose.

Exodus 2:1-2 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took *to wife* a daughter of Levi. **2** And the woman conceived, and bare a son...

So here in Exodus chapter 2, out of that same tribe of Levi comes Moses. Out of Levi comes Aaron. Out of Levi will eventually come the priests who minister before the Lord.

[APPLICATION] Isn't that amazing how God can use a troubled past for His purpose. Maybe you come from a family with problems. Maybe there is anger in your family. Maybe there is addiction. Broken marriages. Maybe your parents made terrible decisions. Maybe generations before you lived completely contrary to the Word of God.

Or maybe you've made foolish decisions yourself. Things you are ashamed of. Things that you have wasted years of your life on. You can't go back and change those things. Levi couldn't go back and undo what happened at Shechem. The consequences were real. But what happened in the past does not have to dictate the direction of the rest of your life.

You can decide for yourself. Right now. Am I on the Lord's side?

You can change the direction of your family. You can raise your children differently. You can choose to serve God today regardless of what happened yesterday.

God does not need a perfect family history to accomplish His purpose. He needs people who will turn to Him and be willing to serve Him.

Think about what God is doing here. From the house of Levi—a tribe with a history of violence and cruelty—God is about to raise up one of the greatest servants in the entire Bible.

A man who will stand before Pharaoh. A man who will lead millions of people out of bondage. A man through whom God will give His law. A man who is described as very meek above all men upon the face of the earth.

Levi was remembered for his **fierce anger**. Yet one of his descendants would become known as the **meekest man upon the earth**. That shows you that you are not bound by the sins and failures of the generations that came before you. God can change the direction.

And here in Exodus 2 that change begins in a very simple way: A man of the house of Levi takes a daughter of Levi to wife...and they have a child. But this isn't going to be an ordinary childhood. Pharaoh had already commanded for this baby to be killed.

So from the moment that Moses is born, his parents are faced with a decision. Are they going to fear the command of Pharaoh? Or are they going to fear God?

That brings us to point 2...

2. Faith Trusts God When the Future Is Uncertain

Exodus 2:2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he *was a goodly child*, she hid him three months.

So Jochebed gives birth to a son. And under normal circumstances, the birth of a son would have been a time of great joy. But these were not normal circumstances.

Remember the command that Pharaoh had just given:

Exodus 1:22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

So the moment Moses is born, his life is in danger. Imagine what it would be like to be a parent at that time...According to the king of Egypt, the most powerful man in the world, this child is supposed to die. So what do you do? Do you comply out of fear? I'm sure there were those who did. But Moses' parents refused to give him up.

The Bible says, **"when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months."** What Does It Mean That Moses Was a "Goodly Child"?

The word **goodly** carries the idea of being beautiful, pleasant.
The New Testament describes Moses in similar language.

Acts 7:19-20 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. **20** In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

Acts says he was **exceeding fair**. He was a beautiful child. The Bible doesn't say that his parents looked at him and somehow knew that he would become the one that God would use to deliver Israel from bondage.

But it does tell us something very important about his parents...

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

This was not just the mother's decision. Amram and Jochebed were united in this decision. They looked at their son. They knew what Pharaoh had commanded. And they made the decision that they were not going to hand him over to be killed. Why?

"Because they were not afraid of the king's commandment."

This is the same thing we just saw with the Hebrew midwives in chapter 1.

"the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them..."

God's people understood that Pharaoh was not the highest authority. There is an authority above Pharaoh. There is a King above every earthly king. There is a God in Heaven to whom Pharaoh himself will answer.

And when the commandments of man directly contradict the commandments of God, **"We ought to obey God, rather than men."**

That's the kind of faith you want to have. When you trust God more than anything else in this life. When you have zero fear of what man can do to you. They did not fear the king's commandment because they had faith in the one who is above all.

The Bible says they successfully hid Moses for three months.

Imagine trying to hide a newborn baby. Babies cry. They make noise. It's hard to take care of a baby under normal circumstances, imagine trying to take care of a baby while you have to worry about him being taken from you and killed.

Every day they had to wonder if someone was going to hear him. Every day carried uncertainty. Yet for three months they continued protecting their son.

But it eventually came to a point where they couldn't do it any longer. The beginning of verse 3 says...

Exodus 2:3 And when she could not longer hide him...

The Bible doesn't tell us exactly why she could no longer hide him. But it's not hard to see how it could have gotten to that point.

So the parents had great faith to hide Moses, but now things were starting to go beyond their control.

[APPLICATION] Sometimes we get the idea that if we trust God enough, everything will become easy. That's not what the Bible teaches.

Sometimes trusting God means continuing to do right while the situation becomes more difficult. Sometimes you reach a point where you say: **"Lord, I've done everything I know how to do. I can't control what happens next."** That's where Jochebed is at. Look what she does next...

Exodus 2:3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid *it* in the flags by the river's brink.

What does she do? She makes an ark. That word should immediately remind us of another story. Noah. God warned Noah that judgment was coming upon the world. And what did Noah do?

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Notice the words: **"By faith Noah... prepared an ark."**

In the same chapter it says **"By faith Moses...was hid for three months"**

In both stories, faith produced action.

It's important to understand the distinction here. Faith and action are not the same.

Noah was not made righteous because he built an ark. In fact, the end of this same verse says that he **"became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."**

But because Noah believed what God had told him, that faith influenced what he did.

God told Noah that judgment was coming, Noah believed God, and because he believed God, he prepared an ark.

The same principle is true here with Moses' parents.

Their hiding Moses did not create their faith. They already had faith in God.

But because they trusted God more than they feared Pharaoh, that faith gave them the courage to do everything within their ability to protect their son.

When she could no longer hide him, she didn't become careless and say, "Well, I trust God, so I'll just throw him into the river and see what happens." No.

She took bulrushes. She built an ark (small vessel). She covered it with pitch and slime. She placed Moses inside and laid it by the flags (the plants that grow on the edge of the river).

She did everything within her ability, and then she had to trust God with what was outside of her control.

That is an important balance for us in our own lives. Trusting God does not mean neglecting the responsibilities that God has given you.

You can trust God to provide for your family, but you still need to work.
You can trust God with your children, but you still need to teach them, discipline them, protect them, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

You do what you're able to do according to the Word of God, and then you trust Him with the things you cannot control. That's exactly what Moses' parents did. They placed him as safely as they could by the river. But once that ark was placed, the outcome was completely outside of their control. Now they had to trust God with what happened next.

3. God Can Turn Destruction Into Deliverance

Exodus 2:3-4 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid *it* in the flags by the river's brink. **4** And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

Verse 4 tells us that Moses' sister stood at a distance watching.
"To wit" simply means **to know** or **to find out** what would happen to him.
Most likely this is Miriam, who we later learn was the sister of Moses and Aaron.

The family didn't just abandon Moses in the river. His sister was standing nearby watching to see what would happen next.

And this is where we begin to see God turn everything upside down.
Remember Pharaoh said **"Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river..."**

Pharaoh intended the river to be a place of death for the Hebrew children.
But God is about to use that same river as part of the preservation of Israel's deliverer.

Exodus 2:5-6 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash *herself* at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. **6** And when she had opened *it*, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him...

Think about the irony. Pharaoh orders the children to be killed. His own daughter finds Moses and has compassion on him.
What Pharaoh intended for destruction, God turned into deliverance.
And Pharaoh eventually reaped exactly what he had sown.
He chose water as the means of destroying the Hebrew children.
But later, when Pharaoh and his army pursue Israel, God destroys them in the water.

Exodus 14:28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Pharaoh sowed destruction, and eventually destruction came back upon him.

There is something even greater pictured in this story. The fact that Moses points us to Jesus Christ.

Moses' life begins in very humble circumstances. He is not born in a palace. He is born into a family of slaves and placed into a little ark.

Jesus Christ also entered this world in humble circumstances. Wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger.

Pharaoh tried to destroy the Hebrew children when Moses was born.

Herod did the same exact thing when Jesus was born. He slew all the children two years and under.

Moses was placed into the waters that were associated with death, yet he came out alive and eventually delivers Israel out of physical bondage.

Jesus Christ was placed in a tomb and went into death itself. But three days later He conquered death and hell and became the deliverer of our souls.

That's one of the messages we can see beginning right here in these first four verses of Exodus 2

God can turn destruction into deliverance.

Pharaoh looked powerful. The situation looked hopeless. But God was working behind the scenes the entire time. The faith of two parents prevailed over fear.

Maybe there is a situation in your life that looks and feels hopeless. Don't be afraid of man. Don't be afraid of the circumstances that you're in. Take everything that you have no control over, and give it over to God. Do it today. Trust Him with everything in your life. Hear His words. Believe His words. Act upon your faith. Serve the Lord with gladness in your life. Let's Pray.