

# Putting the Lord First

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, as we mentioned earlier, we hope in the succeeding weeks to look at the first 10 chapters of the book of Exodus. And so we begin, not unnaturally, with this opening chapter, which is really a setting of the scene.

A setting of the scene of what happens after the time of Joseph, when the Israelites appear to be almost like, you know, a privileged people in the midst of Egypt.

In the very northernmost part of Egypt, they were placed during the days of the Pharaoh who had promoted Joseph. And we know, if we look at a map, that that is pretty much the sort of Nile Delta area.

Now, the River Nile, of course, is that which gives life, humanly speaking, to the land of Egypt. It is that, you know, constant water supply, which means that the flat and fertile lands of Egypt are well watered and able to produce, you know, abundance of food, which means if there's abundance of food, then there's abundance of population.

And so Egypt was, in many ways, one of the world's first superpowers. One of its mighty empires from very early times because of the ready supply of water and therefore of agricultural stability, of the supply of food.

[ 1 : 1 7 ] And the Israelites being in the very northernmost part of Egypt, the delta area where the Nile divides up into lots of different, of lesser rivers, if we can call that, that flat, abundantly watered area where there's abundance of food and pasture land and so on.

And not surprisingly, when it comes to this kind of food supply and this kind of environment compared to the harder, more barren desert soil often of the Holy Land and of Palestine and so on, then they would flourish.

They would abundantly grow, but they don't seem to do it immediately. Immediately, 70 souls come down with Jacob into the land of Egypt.

That's what we read here, 70 souls. That includes, of course, Joseph and his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, which were the children of Asenath, the daughter of the priest, the priest of Potiphar, the priest of On, whom Pharaoh had given him to wife.

So they're already down in Egypt. They are, to all intents and purposes, Egyptian-ified. And the Israelites come down, and we have this list here of the household of Jacob.

[ 2 : 3 1 ] Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, the first four sons of Leah, of course. Then Isaac and Zebulun are next to, and Benjamin, the one son of Rachel.

We're going to, of course, Joseph, the other son of Rachel, is already in Egypt. Dan and Naphtali, these are the two sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid. And then Gad and Asher, the two sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid.

And they're listed in that order, not because that's their, their, their sort of seniority. That's not the age in which they were all born, but rather because the proper wives are listed first.

And then the, the sort of handmaids are listed after that, in that order. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were 70 souls, for Joseph was in Egypt already.

And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. So, even by the time Joseph dies, if you just look slightly up the page, or across the page, depending on where your Bibles are open at, we see that Joseph died, the end of, last verse of Genesis, Joseph died being 110 years old.

[ 3 : 38 ] And they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. So, that means that if he was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh, which he was, when he interpreted the dreams for him, then it is 80 years that Joseph has been, if you like, a prince of the land of Egypt.

He has been sort of promoted and effectively ruling for Egypt, and the sort of salvation that he brought for them, and getting them through the famine years, and so on.

And he's been in that exalted position 80 years. And in that time, of course, you would expect the Israelites to naturally increase a little bit in that time.

But, we read, Joseph died, and all his brethren, and almost as though after that, the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them.

Now, reasons for this, of course, we could say some commentators have pointed out that it's only really with the death of Joseph that we read of this, you know, exponential growth of the Israelites.

[ 4 : 46 ] And we think of what Jesus says himself in John 12, you know, that the hour has come, and the Son of Man should be glorified. He said, Joseph was the means by which the Israelites had been brought into Egypt, by which they had been fed and survived, and Egypt itself had survived the famine years, because the Lord had used Joseph.

But Joseph died. And I think, oh, terrible, that's the end of it all. No, that is the way of all flesh. And what happens when the one who had been under God, humanly speaking, their saviour, from famine and disaster dies?

Well, you think, oh, well, that's the end of it. No, it's not. That's the beginning. Here we are at the beginning of the book of Exodus, the next stage of the mighty works God intends to do, And we find that the scene setting for that is that the Israelites do not wither and die with the death of Joseph.

Rather, they increase exponentially, just as we find when it comes to the ultimate saviour, Jesus Christ. We find that when he dies, as he predicts and prophesies there in John 12 that we were quoting from, and his enemies stop, that's that, that's him dead.

Now at last we can relax. We'll seal the tomb, put a guard in it, and leave aside for a moment the fact of the resurrection and how they couldn't control that, that this one person that they thought they had got rid of, he appears to his disciples, he builds up and strengthens them, he gives them the gift of his spirit after he ascends into heaven, which means that not only is his life force and power and spirit with all of his disciples, but it means that it can be spread much farther around the world than simply his physical human presence could be.

[ 6 : 48 ] If Jesus had still been in the flesh, he would have been, humanly speaking, one man. And when he is confined in one place in his human flesh, if he is in Galilee, he cannot be in Jerusalem.

If he is in Jerusalem, he cannot be in Antioch, not that he ever went there. But he could not travel to lots of different places and be in the midst of his people everywhere at the same time.

Now that he has ascended into heaven by his spirit, he is able to be present with his people. And what happens to his people? After the Lord Jesus himself is put to death, when the corn of wheat dies and falls into the ground, it brings forth much fruit.

His resurrection, his ascension, the pouring out of his spirit, and the number of the apostles, or the disciples rather, and believers, just increases and increases and increases.

It fills up Jerusalem. They try to persecute them down. They just scatter from the four winds, taking the gospel message with them. They scatter into Egypt and into Syria and into Asia, and they go all over the world with this gospel account.

[ 7 : 59 ] And it just grows and grows until eventually the very Roman Empire itself, which put Christ to death, becomes Christianized. And the carpenter of Nazareth, humanly speaking, the corn of wheat that died and fell into the ground, God the Son, overcomes all his enemies.

So thus we have, when Joseph dies, it is not the end for the children of Israel. It is around the beginning of their increase. And they waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply.

And it come to pass that when they are followed out in any war, they join also unto our enemies and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. We don't know how long it is after Joseph dies that this political change happens.

But we have to remember that if you were to look at the sort of history facts of ancient Egypt, you see that there are something like 30 different dynasties over a couple of thousand years of ancient Egypt.

[ 9 : 15 ] And the dynasties changed on a regular basis. So whilst we may look at this verse 8, for example, and say, A new king arose over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

Oh, how terrible. How forgetful and ungrateful that is. Imagine forgetting all that Joseph had done. It doesn't follow that it's simply mere human forgetfulness or ingratitude.

It could quite possibly be a complete change of political regime. One dynasty falling, another coming in from a different part of the country, perhaps from further upper Egypt, for all we know now.

Upper Egypt, of course, confusingly, as you look at a map, is not the northern part, it's the southern part, because it's further up the Nile that you're going. So further down towards Ethiopia, they could be coming from there.

It could be a completely different regime. It could be a new set of people who don't owe, in one sense, their rise to power, or their staying in power to what Joseph, the Hebrew, had done so long ago.

[ 10 : 25 ] So we should recognize that it's not mere forgetfulness. But given how frequently the Egyptian dynasties changed, it could well be just a regime change here, which views the Hebrews in a less positive light.

And so he says, right, let's deal wisely with them. Obviously, the Hebrews in the land of Egypt had not done anything to provoke the Egyptians in terms of national security.

But if you look at the geography of how Egypt is placed, if you think of a map, and you think, well, there's the Sinai Peninsula, yes. But then if you look at the very sort of neck of the Sinai Peninsula, at the top of the Gulf of Suez there, before the building of the Suez Canal, of course, you've got that narrow neck of land where you've got, yes, a couple of lakes and so on that kind of barred away a bit.

But you've got, in fact, a very, very narrow gateway into Egypt proper. And that gateway comes in precisely where?

It comes in precisely at the Nile Delta, where the Israelites are, the land of Roshan. The gateway to Egypt is peopled by those whom this new pharaoh regards as suspect.

[ 11 : 43 ] If an attack is going to come on Egypt, if war is going to come on Egypt, it is not going to come from the Libyan Desert, because there's not enough strength of any enemy to survive there.

It's not going to come from further south, way up in the far reaches of the Nile, coming all the way down into lower Egypt. It's not going to come from there. If any attack is going to come, it's going to come down through Asia.

It's going to come across the Sinai Peninsula, and it's going to come in at that narrow little gate, that narrow neck of land there, precisely where the Hebrews are.

So what it says, you know, they built in treasure cities, Python and Ramesses. Some interpretations of what the original says there understand that to be not so much in terms of cities of silver and gold and treasures that way, but rather garrison cities, these fortresses that are built at that place, about the locations of Python and Ramesses.

They don't know for sure, but they've pretty much found out the rough area of where they are in terms of archaeological excavation. And they are placed exactly where you would expect either a defensive position to be put.

[ 12 : 58 ] On the one hand, you know, guarding the gateway into Egypt, not so much treasure cities, but rather defense cities, fortified cities. But fortified cities would need ready supplies of what?

Soldiers, garrisons need an abundant supply of food. And the archaeological evidence would suggest that there was abundant granaries in these particular cities.

Because elsewhere in Scripture, remember, that supplies of wheat or corn are described as treasures of wheat. To have an abundance of corn, an abundance of wheat, an abundance of food supply was regarded as a treasure, was regarded as a wealth in the ancient world.

Because it is the one currency that never goes out of debt. If you can't feed yourself or your armies or your peoples, then it doesn't matter how much gold you've got in your closet or in your treasure chest.

You can't eat the gold. The real treasures are the things that you can use. So these treasure cities, they may well have been abundantly and lavishly furnished and so on, but the real strength of them is their fortified defensive position.

[ 14 : 14 ] If they're looking out the way, or it may be regarded as they're also built precisely there in order to contain the new slave population in Egypt, to stop them getting out and to stop enemies coming in.

The position of Python and Ramesses as these particular cities. Fortified cities, treasure cities built with slave labor.

Now, many of these facts, of course, can be verified from, if you can call it, secular history, archaeological digs and so on. When the Egyptian dynasties changed, and when one pharaoh came in and displaced another, sometimes what happened is he might even be displacing his own brother or the previous legitimate pharaoh, and maybe a convenient assassination or somebody, just a coup or whatever, gets rid of the older brother.

Because one thing you'll notice as Exodus unfolds is that when it comes to the plague upon the firstborn, and all the firstborn in Egypt die, from, you know, from the pharaoh upon his throne all the way down to the captive in the dungeon, pharaoh himself doesn't die.

Now, if pharaoh had been the eldest son, if he'd been a firstborn son, he would have died. Now, it doesn't mean, of course, that he took his crown illegitimately, but it does tie in with the facts that often when there's a regime change or when one pharaoh grabs the crown from another, he might get rid of an older brother or somebody with a stronger initial claim.

[ 15 : 54 ] So whatever his circumstances, clearly pharaoh himself is not a firstborn son when it comes to the actual deliverance of the people from Egypt.

Now, whether or not the actual pharaoh, at the time of Moses and coming out of Egypt, is the same one who first begins to oppress them, it's highly unlikely. This is probably, you know, the first one that begins the oppression, and it may be the second or third pharaoh down by the time that Moses is actually leading the children of Israel out of Egypt.

But this is their way of dealing with them. Enslaved, utilize their strength, and rather than just sort of annihilate them, because that would be not economically profitable for the Egyptians, so they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens.

They built for Pharaoh, treasure, cities, pride, and ramesses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew, and they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

They are frustrated because they're trying to control them, and the more they oppress them, the more they grow. Now, of course, it is a recognized human characteristic that tough times often produce stronger, tougher individuals.

[ 17 : 09 ] Difficult times produce people equipped for the strength to deal with them. Whereas, quite often, when the pursuit of happiness is taken as the pursuit of comfort and simply ease and wealth, then what that produces is simply, you know, dissipation.

And we become weak, and we become sort of indolent, and we become sort of, you know, unable to do anything. That's pretty much the kind of internal sort of disintegration we're seeing in our society now.

It is a society of comparative comfort and indifference and indolence and always looking for a cause to be excited about except never turning to the one true cause of blessing and righteousness.

It's one reason our country is disintegrating because having got through the hard times of previously in the last century, now we're in a time of peace and ease and comfort, and so all the social disintegration, moral disintegration that goes with that, if we don't have the Lord as our bedrock and as our anchor, we just dissipate.

Now, we do know from history that the times of Ramesses, the great pharaoh, Ramesses II, almost certainly, who's described as the one here, it was a time of great luxury in ancient Egypt, and not only these particular cities, but huge cities of great wealth and great tombs and so on were built and a time of great luxury and great increase.

[ 18 : 45 ] He's the one who really increased slave labor across the land of Egypt. He didn't just enslave the Hebrews, he would have enslaved also large portions of the population as well, but the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, and mortar and brick, and in all manner of service in the field.

All their service when they made them to serve was with rigor. Now, something, of course, we need to recognize here as well is that the Israelites themselves had come into Egypt as a means of saving their lives.

that which had been to them blessing and good and relief from starvation in due course became a place of bitterness and of oppression.

Now, of course, we can draw so many potential spiritual parallels with that. We could, for example, even look in terms of this world. This world is that which has given us life.

[ 19 : 52 ] It is that which sustains us, physically speaking. It is the means by which our bodies, which are the temple of our souls, are kept and enabled to continue.

But at the end of the day, we soon discover, after not too many years, that this world which has given us life and sustained us and so on, we can speak humanly, and believe the Lord out just for a wee second, this world sustains us and gives us all that we have.

And so it becomes, in due course, a place of bitterness. It becomes a place of emptiness. It becomes a place, yes, of oppression and all the injustices that we see in the world and what was a sort of bright, beautiful world when we're young and have got everything ahead of us.

We soon see the dark side of it and the bitterness that comes with it. This world which was the means of our life of support and so on, it seemed to be a place of bitterness and without the Lord, a place of emptiness and indeed hopelessness if we do not have the Lord.

Now, the Israelites themselves, we have to recognize in this, remember that they have been well and truly naturalized in Egypt after all these generations.

[ 21 : 12 ] Christians, they are not simply the pure worshippers of Jehovah that their forefather Jacob brought down with them. Many of them have gone the way of Egyptian idolatry and this is another reason, no doubt, why the Lord is not unjust, to allow them to be afflicted for a time because they have turned away from him or many of them have turned away from him and we know this to be the case because we read in the book of Joshua, chapter 24, at verse 14, Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt and serve ye the Lord.

And again in Ezekiel, chapter 20, we read it, verses 7 and 8, Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt.

I am the Lord your God. But they rebelled against me and would not hearken unto me. They did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

Then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. So although, yes, it is Pharaoh who is oppressing the Israelites here in Egypt, and although, yes, they are suffering hard bondage and many cruelties, and although the attempt to exterminate them gradually by killing off their male children, as we'll come to that in a second, is a great evil, yet Pharaoh is still not the almighty, all-powerful, demi-god that he thinks himself to be.

He is simply seen, as Ezekiel shows us, he is simply a tool, an instrument in the hand of the Lord. That whatever the wealth or abundance of Egypt, whatever the saving of their physical lives for a time, for a generation, eventually it becomes a place of bitterness.

[ 23 : 26 ] It becomes a place of oppression. It becomes a place of bondage. And the more they turn to the false gods of that land, the greater their affliction and their misery.

And there is ultimately only one deliverance for them, and that is to be brought up out of the land of Egypt to leave behind all the gods and the false abundance, which the Lord demonstrates he can reduce in the space of a very few weeks.

He can reduce it to absolute abject poverty with all the plagues that he sends, and to come out to the desert where they have nothing except their dependence upon the Lord.

To go back to basics, as it were, and to depend upon the Lord. Now all of us, perhaps, if we know the Lord as our saviour, will have a different story to tell as to how the Lord brought us to that place.

But I imagine one consistent aspect of that witness will be that the Lord will have, at some stage, brought us down very, very low, brought us down to the place where we were hemmed in and hedged about and had nowhere to turn, and eventually, in desperation, we cried out to the Lord.

[ 24 : 47 ] Eventually, when there was nowhere else to go, we surrendered ourselves to the Lord. Sometimes he needs to almost crush the rebellious spirit before it will yield itself to the Lord.

But remember that it is almost. It says in Isaiah, remember that a bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench, he will not absolutely destroy even the most rebellious, but bring them down to the stage where they have little chops or little alternative in the midst of their desperation, but to choose either the Lord and salvation and deliverance or the ongoing bitterness of idolatry and slavery.

And the king of Egypt then spoke to the Hebrew midwives of which the name of the one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Pua. Now, of course, it is impossible for us to take it that there were only two midwives for all the thousands of Hebrews there would be by this stage.

So these would be the ones who were perhaps most and maybe in charge of the others, the ones who had the most influence or the ones who were most known to Pharaoh and his family and so on.

and perhaps they, if they had influence with the others, if they were seen to obey Pharaoh's command, others might follow their example. Their influence is taken as read.

[ 26 : 17 ] But it would be, I think, wrong of us to think that there were absolutely no other Hebrew midwives in the whole of the land of Egypt. Some commentators take it that these two women are in fact Egyptians, that there are Egyptian midwives who simply minister to the Hebrew women.

That is possible. It is probably less likely in the culture and history of the time. The Egyptians regarded the Hebrews as sort of a race beneath them.

You know, they were the shepherds. They were the ones that dealt with the cattle and all the unsavory business that the Egyptians themselves didn't want to have to be concerned with. You know, we read in Genesis every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.

The Egyptians would not even eat at the same table as Joseph's brothers because that was an abomination to them. So it is highly unlikely, I would think, that self-respecting Egyptian women would be content to go and wait on the pregnant Hebrew women as they were about to give birth.

And they would probably almost certainly consider that way beneath them. So these will probably be actual Israelite women. And why these particular ones are called to fail, we don't know exactly, but obviously they must have had sufficient knowledge of the court and be known to him and perhaps have influence with the other midwives and women throughout the Israelite nation.

[ 27 : 47 ] when ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women and see them upon the school. If it be a son, then ye shall kill him, but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. Now this would be an easy enough thing to do.

If you were the one sort of bringing the child out as it comes from the womb, and remember births were, and continue to be in many parts of the world, extremely dangerous for both the mother and the child, and that as the child is born, anything can happen.

It just might not start breathing. A midwife who was that way and crying could just very easily sort of quietly strangle the child, put her hands around its neck and just squeeze the life out of it very easily.

Oh, it must have been a difficult bird. Look, oh, he's died. What a shame. And that would be quite easy to do for a midwife who was determined to do it.

It's of course ultimate irony that nowadays, of course, the Royal College of Midwives is seeking to push greater availability of abortion in our country, and that the leadership of the midwives themselves in our country are pushing that.

[ 29 : 00 ] Whether or not the midwives in general are doing it, but the leadership of their organization is seeking to do it for political purposes, obviously. But these two women, despite their instructions from a tyrannical pharaoh, are not prepared to do it.

They feared God and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men's children alive. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said of them, why have you done this thing and have saved the men's children alive?

And the midwives said of the pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women, for they are lively. Now, the word translated lively, it doesn't just mean, oh, they're vigorous, they're much stronger than your weak, weedy women, Egyptians, rather the sense of they're like the beasts of the field, they're like the animals.

So, you know, we've got lots of little lambs around us just now, of course, on the island, and that's all very nice, but, you know, nobody came, there wasn't vets hanging on, waiting with each individual mother sheep as she produced her lamb.

When a cow calves, it does it by itself. When the beasts of the field produce their young, they don't have medical expertise attending on them. They do it themselves in the field.

[ 30 : 16 ] And so, likewise, this is the sort of way they're describing the Hebrew women, they're like the animals, they're like the beasts of the field, they're vigorous, they do it themselves, even before we get there.

And this is what they say. Now, you could say, is this a lie? Because clearly it says they did save the men children alive, verse 17. But no doubt there were instances where it was in fact true that before the midwives could come, particularly as white women had already given birth, and they had help from their neighbors or whatever.

So it wouldn't be a complete and total lie, but it would not be complete and totally all the whole truth, because sometimes they saved the men children alive deliberately, and other times, no doubt, the Hebrew women simply gave birth themselves.

If it had been a complete and total lie, it is difficult to see how God of truth could totally approve of it. But at any rate, God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and waxed very mighty.

It came to pass because the midwives feared God, he made them houses. In other words, he built up their own families. That's what the word houses there means. It doesn't mean he built them a beautiful place to live.

[ 31 : 35 ] It means that he built up their own families. Houses means people, often in ancient, ancient descriptions. descriptions. Likewise, if you think of royal house, you know, the house of Stuart, the house of Annabur, the house of Winter, and so on, it doesn't mean buildings where they live.

It means people. It means families. So he built them houses because they feared God more than they feared Pharaoh. And this is an important point we should recognize.

It's that the king of the land, appointed by God, of course, the powers that be are ordained with God, he has given them instructions. But those instructions fly in the face of God's determination to preserve life.

And to fear God comes higher than to fear Pharaoh. And to acknowledge the God of all the earth, as the apostles said to the chief priests and the Jewish leaders, we ought to obey God rather than man.

It is legitimate to obey the laws of the land and the powers that be, where God has placed them, provided what they command does not conflict with the laws of God and what he requires of us.



[ 32 : 49 ] Our first duty must always be to God. And this is what these Hebrew midwives do. They put the Lord first. This is something which we all need to recognize.

Because in this day and age, it will not necessarily be for us a question of persecution from a tyrant. you know, in order to disobey the Lord or to worship other gods rather than the true God.

But what there will be for us in our environment and in our culture and in our day will be a hundred different temptations to give way on what God commands and what a previous generation might perhaps have taken as normal obedience to the Lord.

Ah well, that doesn't really matter now. Nobody does that nowadays, do they? And you know, we can let that go. And the temptation to give in to the God of this world, to give in to the equivalent of Pharaoh, who of course called himself a God.

It is the powers of this world, the powers that seek to set themselves against the Lord. If it is a choice between obeying the Lord on the one hand or obeying what the world says on the other, then it is likely for us to be a far more subtle temptation.

[ 34 : 09 ] A desire to just go with the flow and to just give in and just do what the world wants because that's the easier thing to do. But like the midwives here, what the true follower of the Lord must do is fear God more than they fear men.

Of course they would have been afraid of fail, but they fear God more. And if we have the fear of the Lord as our ultimate drive, then we don't have to be afraid of anything less or anything else.

Psalm 19 tells us the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. But what the Egyptians sought to do, what Pharaoh seeks to do, is to break the back, as it were, of the Hebrew nation.

Content to let the little girls live because, of course, they can be forcibly married off to Egyptians, absorbed within the Egyptian nation. And as invariably in that culture and time that the wife would go to her husband's household and become part of his family and be absorbed within it, the Israelites did that too, of course, then it didn't really matter too much if there were girls because they could marry, they could then be absorbed by the Egyptian population.

They could produce children who were half Egyptian and half Hebrew and then they themselves would marry Egyptians and gradually the nation of the Hebrews would disappear if you just eliminate the boys.

[ 35 : 42 ] And, of course, this is what Herod sought to do, of course, with the baby Jesus. He sought to kill all, not simply the male children, he didn't even quibble, he killed all the girls, they killed all the children two years and under to try and eliminate his rival.

It's what we read of in Revelation 12, again, verse 3, there appeared another wonder in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of manner and her child was caught up unto God and to his throne. Some commentators have suggested that perhaps the Egyptian wise men, the priests or whatever, had predicted to fail that there might come a deliverer from amongst the Hebrews who would lead them out of Egypt and that that might have been what he was trying to stop by killing the male children.

It's possible. It is speculation. We don't have any scriptural evidence for it. But we do know that he tried to destroy the Hebrew nation by killing all the baby boys.

[ 37 : 00 ] But it didn't succeed. God prevented it from happening. But that was the context in which, having failed to do it amongst the Hebrews themselves, he then charged all his people, the Egyptians themselves, if they ever knew of any Hebrew baby boys, kill them.

Report them to the soldiers, report them to the authorities, kill them. Every son that is born you shall cast into the river and every daughter you shall save alive. So this is the context in which, in due course of time, Moses comes to be born.

It is already a setting of that which had been a place of refuge, had been a place of blessing and survival, now become a place of bondage and bitterness.

A place in which those who have now degenerated into paganism, grown under their burden and are in desperate need of deliverance.

And into such a situation, the Lord, in due course, when the fullness of time was come, is prepared to send his deliverer. Not with fiery chariots from heaven just yet, but as we'll read in subsequent chapters, just as a little baby.

[ 38 : 19 ] Just as when he comes himself as a saviour for his people, the ultimate deliverance, so when it comes to delivering his people from Egypt, the deliverer comes initially as a little child.

This is the gentleness in which the Lord comes to his people. This is the way in which he comes to deliver them. Of course we think, oh no, but that's going to take too long.

We can't afford to wait for a baby to be born, to be grown up, for all the time it's going to take before we get delivered. And even when he was born, as you know, Moses didn't even begin that deliverance until he was 80 years old.

So there's a lot of suffering to go yet. There's a lot of time to endure. But what we ourselves may know for certain is whatever may be the struggles, the bondage, the difficulties and the pain and confinement of this world, God sees.

God knows. God has a plan for it all. And even the oppressor Pharaoh is merely an instrument in the hand of God. And his deliverance is planned.

[ 39 : 32 ] It is on the way. It is what he intends to do. And we will see that in subsequent chapters. And for us here, in this day and age, our ultimate deliverance is from this world of sin and death and the false gods of this world who cannot deliver and who cannot save.

For us, the deliverer has already come. He has already been the baby. He has already been grown up. He has already died on the cross. He has already risen again.

He has already sent to the Spirit. He has already revealed himself to lost sinners. And still, for the most part, most people would rather go on in their bondage than embrace the ready-made deliverer.

That is true for the vast majority. Hebrews, Egyptians, Jews, Gentiles, Scots, English, whatever nation we may be under heaven, the vast majority will not seek deliverance at the hand of the one true deliverer.

That is true for the vast majority. What you have to ask yourself tonight is, is that true for you as well?

[ 40 : 52 ] Yea, Lord, thank you. Good one. What about you? Isto Pai, you may, for Don a long go to heaven■ard■rau, even, for father Joseph.