

February 20 – Exodus 1

The first six verses of chapter 1 serve to connect this narrative to the end of the book of Genesis. Keep in mind that many of the readers would not have known the story of how Israel ended up in Egypt, bondage for 400 years, and were ultimately delivered by the strong hand of God. So Moses consciously connects Exodus with Genesis to show that this book is part of God's larger story of redemption. For example, Ex. 1:1 uses the exact words of Gen. 46:8, "Now these are the names...." A note before we jump into this first chapter that I find interesting is that God chooses to remind us in verse 5 that the number of people who entered Egypt from Jacob's (Israel's) family was only 70 and at the time of the Exodus there were hundreds of thousands. Verse 7 says, "But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty." This is yet another fulfillment of a promise of God given to Jacob in Gen. 46:3; Exactly like the faithfulness of God to His promises made to Abraham in the book of Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:5. Beloved this should be so comforting to us today. We too have been given many great and precious promises from Him who cannot lie. We can rest with complete confidence on the perfect Word of God.

With the connection made between Genesis and Exodus, Moses moves into the history of how Israel came to be slaves in Egypt in verses 7-14. Remember that their beginning was so blessed and promising. We learn in this first chapter that Joseph died and a new pharaoh came into power who did not know Joseph (v.8) and that's when the circumstances for the Israelites began to deteriorate quickly. It appears that the main reason the Pharaoh feared the Israelites was because of their numerical growth. It is very interesting to note that the rapid growth was a blessing of God in faithful fulfillment of His promises and yet caused them to be at odds with the society in which they lived. We must remember brothers and sisters that in this fallen world, the blessings of God are often in conflict with the corrupt values of our world and serve as a threat to those who are not walking in the ways of the Lord. The gift of Jesus Christ to the world is the purest example of this. He was a perfect and good gift from God to the world and the world put Him to death. But, God's perfect plan of redemption could not be and was not stopped by Satan's attacks then and are not now. It is thrilling to notice that in verse 12 it says, "But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out." The same is true for His children today. Satan does all he can to stop God's perfect plan from unfolding in our lives but dear friends, he can't stop God. As it is written in Romans 8:31, "Since God is for us, who can be against us." Or in 1 John 4:4, "He who is in us is greater than he who is in this world." Beloved we need not fear what this world can do to us for it is vain to fight against the purposes of God.

So the Pharaoh calls for population control of the Israelites which he hopes to accomplish first by literally working them to death (v. 11-14). Realizing that this did not achieve his intended goal, the Pharaoh commanded the Hebrews midwives to kill the newborn Hebrew baby boys. Since the midwives would not carry out this brutal order, the Pharaoh then orders his own people to aid in the killing of newborn Hebrew boys. All of this was to control the population of the Israelites so that they could be kept in bondage. The irony is that the more they suffered and were persecuted, the more they grew. Of course the deeper truth, as we learned from Gen. 3:15 is that enmity exists between Satan and the "Seed" of the woman and Satan has always tried to destroy God's plan of redemption. We see this in Rev. 12:4 and here in Exodus 1. Pharaoh is just a tool in Satan's hand to carry out his sinister plan. BUT, we need not fear as we know God's plan will succeed and He uses Satan's attacks on us for our good.

Psalms 119:67 says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word." May it prove true of us all that "the more we are afflicted" the more shall we "grow" in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.