

Raising up a Saviour

- This morning we're starting a new series running right up until Christmas on the OT book of Exodus
- Even if you're not a Christian, you are probably somewhat familiar with the book of Exodus ... not least because of the movie – the 10 Commandments, starring Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner ... which gets screened almost every Easter
 - Of course the movie makes famous those two epic moments in biblical history
 - Crossing of Red Sea ...
 - 10 Commandments
- Now why we are we going to study the book of Exodus?
- There was another movie released in 2014 starring Christian Bale that covers this book of the Bible called – *Exodus: Gods and Kings*
- *God's and Kings* is an appropriate title ... because Exodus is all about
 - God and kings > kings such as Pharaoh who set themselves up in opposition to God
 - who is seeking to bring about his plans and purposes and fulfil his promises to his people
 - Pharaoh – who is seeking to oppose God and undermine and thwart God's plans
 - But notice the title says ... *Gods and Kings* > that is ... many gods
 - For while there is only one true God
 - Exodus picks up the theme that there are other 'gods' to serve and worship
 - The 10 commandments picks up this theme right off the bat
 - *"You shall have no other gods but me"*
 - *"You shall not make an idol and bow down and worship it"*
 - You see there is also a battle going on within the human heart between the gods or the idols of the heart that seek to turn people away from God
- And so Exodus has much to teach us about God and the way he works to overcome those rulers, institutions and nations that stand in his way
- And it has much to teach us about ourselves and the desires of our hearts that constantly lead us away from God and need turning back to him
- And whether it's God overcoming the rulers, institutions and nations who suppress his people

- Or whether it's God overcoming the idols of the human heart that turn people away from him ...
 - Exodus shows us that God is the one who saves people from these things
 - That's what Exodus means = deliverance, redemption, lead out
 - God is a God who saves
- And Exodus 1 & 2 is all about the raising up of the one who God would use to save his people – Moses
- But before we get to Moses ... we need to understand what he saves from
- So this morning ... we're looking at Raising up a Saviour
 - *Salvation from misery and slavery*
 - *Salvation through suffering*
 - *Salvation through the weak and rejected*

1. Salvation from misery & slavery

- The first thing we learn from this passage is that salvation is rescue from the misery and slavery of serving anything in your life that's more important than God (repeat)
- Before we get into the detail, let me give you the background to these chapters
- Israelites had come down to Egypt 400 years previously due to a famine in the land of Canaan
- Eventually Joseph and all his brothers died, as did the Pharaoh
 - And with their deaths went the good relationship the Israelites had with the Egyptians
- In addition, God was fulfilling his promise to Abraham of giving him many descendants ...
 - and the 70 who had initially arrived from Canaan 400 years earlier
 - ... had now become a small nation of over 2 million people
- Now ... they were no longer welcomed as settlers in the land, but seen as a threat to Egypt and their national security
- And so what did the Egyptians do?
 - v11 - *So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, ...* ¹⁴ *They made their lives bitter with hard labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labour the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.*
- They forced the Israelites into slavery
- Verse 14 picks up on a key idea here ... of service

- The NIV translates it labour or work ... but they both literally read > serve or service
- So a more literal translation of v14 would read
 - *They made their lives bitter in hard **service**, in clay, and in brick, and in every kind of **service** in the field; all their **service** in which they have **served** is with rigour*
- The NIV changes it to make it more readable ... but what it does is obscure this key idea which is this ...
 - If you serve anything other than God ... you're a slave
 - And when you're a slave ... all you have is misery and bitterness (v14)
- This is the opposite of what God's people are meant to be doing
 - When God eventually sends Moses to Pharaoh ... he says to Pharaoh
 - *"God says let my people go ... so that they may worship me"*
 - In other words, the whole point of God rescuing the Israelites from Egypt ...
 - is not so they can have caramel latte's in the promised land
 - it's so they can worship God > so they can serve God
 - Yet here they are ... forced to serve another king ... where they're in slavery
- Now the book of Exodus is about salvation, liberation, rescue, freedom
- But in today's world ... when people talk about or think about freedom ...
 - they think that freedom means freedom to do what I want
 - We think freedom means
 - not having any master at all ...
 - that I'm my own master ...
 - that I have the freedom to choose what I want to do and live my life as I see fit
- The book of Exodus blows that idea of freedom out of the water
- For in Exodus ... we see that God frees his people ... not so they can go and live any way they want
 - He frees them so they can serve him ... so they can worship him
- The point is, unless you serve and worship the living God ... you are actually still a slave
 - Unless you centre your life on him ... you're not really free
 - Real freedom comes when we serve and worship God

- Let me explain
- Anything you centre your life on makes you a slave to it
- Anyone who doesn't centre their life on God is a slave
- How does this work?
- Everybody lives for something
 - Everybody has something they live for
 - Something that makes them happy or satisfied or fulfilled
 - Something that you say
 - "If I have that I have significance"
 - "If I have that I am happy"
 - "If I have that I am fulfilled"
- It could be a religious thing
 - If I'm devout ... or if I'm moral ... or if I'm righteous
- Or it could be a secular thing
 - If I have a good job ... a happy marriage / family ... professional achievements
- Everybody lives for something
- And whatever that thing is ... we're slaves to it
- You know why?
 - Because you can't help but live and act in a way that gets you that thing that gives you significance, makes you happy and fulfilled
 - And what happens if you don't get it or achieve that thing you live for?
 - It devastates you > you despair > you get depressed
 - What happens if circumstances threaten your chances of having it
 - You get angry, you get anxious, you get fearful
- You see what it does?
 - It has enslaved you, you're in chains to it
- Only if God is the centre of your life ... can you be free from that type of slavery
 - Only if God is the one you serve
 - Only if God is the one who gives you your significance
 - Only if God is the one who gives your fulfillment ... can you be free from being a slave to those other things
- Only in him will you never be devastated or despairing or anxious or fearful
 - Because in him you have a rock and a foundation that can never be taken away or let you down

- And so the first thing we learn here from Exodus 1 is that salvation is rescue from slavery of anything in your life that's more important than God
- We all serve something ... we all have some master
 - Unless God is your master and you are serving him ... the reality is you are still a slave to something else
- Therefore, you are only truly free ... when you're life is centered on God and you are serving and worshipping him

2. Salvation through suffering

- Second thing we learn is that God often works his salvation behind the scenes through hard and difficult times ... through suffering (repeat)
- As you read Ch 1 & 2 ... it seems as though God is absent throughout all the suffering of God's people
- It starts off with Pharaoh pressing the Israelites into slavery
- To make matters worse, he ordered midwives to kill the new born baby boys
- Finally he orders all new born Hebrew boys are to be thrown into the River Nile
- Things are getting worse and worse for the Israelites ... and in the midst of their suffering and misery ...
 - God seems absent
 - God doesn't seem to care
 - God isn't doing anything about it
- When all started happening ... surely many of them were asking
 - "Where is God in all of this?"
 - "Where was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when they came to take us?"
- Very similar question we ask
 - after Lindt Cafe shooting
 - when MH17 was shot down over Ukraine killing 27 Australians
- Where's God when bad things happen? He seems absent!
- But when you look closely ... you can see God is clearly at work in the midst of their suffering
 - In fact, every bad thing, God works out for good
 - Everything Pharaoh does ... achieves the exact opposite of what he wanted

- v12 > more the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites, the more they multiplied and spread
- v17-20 > despite ordering the midwives to kill all new born boys ...
 - they refused to obey
 - and God was kind to and protected the midwives
 - and again the Israelites continued to increase in number and become even more numerous
- Ch 2 > it was the very order to throw all baby boys into the Nile River that meant Moses was placed in the basket in the river ...
 - Only to be picked up by the princess ... who somewhat amazingly adopted him, despite knowing he was a Hebrew and ought to have been drowned ...
 - Then by virtue of living in the palace ... Moses received all the education and training that equipped him to confront the Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of slavery to freedom
- So while on the face of it ... it looked like God was absent and uninterested and unable to do anything to watch over and protect his people
 - Where as ... in actual fact ... we actually see God working in and through those situations for good
- **Application**
- What does this teach us?
- Firstly ... when God seems most hidden he's not
 - When God seems most absent ... he's not
- He's always working for his good plans and purposes
 - He's always at work, even in the suffering and difficult circumstances of we go through in life
 - He's always working to bring about his good
- And the reason we cannot see what he's doing is because our little spiritual pee-brains don't have the ability to get the perspective of what he's doing
 - It's like a little child is unable to get the perspective of what the Prime Minister is doing to run the country
- So there's our second point ... salvation often happens through suffering
- Finally, salvation is often happens through the weak and the rejected, not the strong and the powerful

3. Salvation through the weak and rejected

- We see several times through these chapters how God works through the weak, powerless and the rejected
 - This happens time and again throughout the Bible
 - God works in and through and for outsiders not insiders
 - In Genesis, he worked through the younger brother not the older brother
 - Isaac, not Ishmael > Jacob, not Esau
 - He worked through women who were old and barren -
 - Sarah not Hagar
 - Rachel not Leah
 - Later in the Bible he worked through women who were outsiders – Ruth > a Gentile ... and Rahab > Gentile and a prostitute
 - God works through weakness not through power
 - He works through the rejected, not those who are on the inside
 - He works through failure, not through achievement

- Who does God work through in Exodus 1 & 2?
- It's the women
- First it's the midwives
 - What do we notice about the midwives
 - They were childless > and in that culture to be barren is to be cursed > means they would have been social outcasts
 - And yet God strengthens them to stand up to Pharaoh and allow his plans and purposes to be fulfilled
 - And what does God do ... he blesses them with children of their own

- Secondly, Miriam
 - Sister of Moses > just a child
 - Those days, children were nobodies ... they were to be treated like goods and chattels
 - Yet God uses this little girl to bring rescue for Moses

- Thirdly, the Princess ...
 - Sure she had power ... but she was a Gentile!
 - She was a religious outsider and a racial outsider
 - Yet she showed great compassion and bravery in defying the decree of her Father > great risk

- You see what's happening here?

- God uses the poor > God uses the woman > God uses the excluded > God uses the racial outcast
- God uses the religious, racial, social, gender outsider to bring about his plans and purposes

- What's that mean?
- If you're here this morning and you're thinking ... "I'm a nobody" ... well think again
 - If you're willing to put God first ... like the women in Ch 1 & 2
 - You matter to God
 - For God works in and through and for the so called nobodies of this world

- Secondly, if you really have a heart for God ... then you will also have a heart for those who are weak and powerless and rejected
 - You'll want to care for the so-called nobodies of this world ... like God cares to them
 - God's people ought to have the same compassion, care and concern for the outsider as God does
 - For he works in, through and for such people ... and his ppl should too

- Summary ...
 - First ... serving anything other than God is slavery
 - Secondly ... God is always at work in the hard times, so trust him
 - Thirdly ... you should really care for the outcasts and nobodies of this world

- But we cannot leave it there
- Because if you stop with these three principles of Moses and not the one Moses points us to ... you will strangle yourself trying to live those principals out

- What do we mean the person to whom Moses points?
- Doesn't the life of Moses ring a bell? Doesn't it sound a little familiar?
- You see Moses points us forward to an even greater Moses
 - The king decrees that all infant children should be killed ... and yet a child is born
 - He leaves the royal palace and goes to his own people who reject him
 - He grows up to lead his people out of slavery to freedom
 - As an adult, another king wants to have him killed

- He's under the sentence and condemnation of death ... and yet it's through that sentence of death that he becomes a saviour of his people
- It's pointing to Jesus right?

- Did you know in Luke 9:31 when Jesus is transfigured on the mountain - who also appeared there with him? Elijah and Moses
 - And we're told *"they spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem."*
 - You know what that word 'departure' is in the original language = EXODUS
 - Elijah and Moses were speaking to Jesus about his exodus, his departure which was to be fulfilled in Jerusalem
 - They were speaking about his death on the cross as the exodus

- You know what this means?
- Moses 'exodus' was great, but it was only a social and physical liberation for one people group
- Jesus 'exodus' means he was to be the ultimate Moses, the ultimate saviour, the ultimate liberator ... leading an exodus that would liberate from sin and death for all eternity for everyone
- Moses liberates at the risk of his life ... but Jesus liberates at the cost of his life ...by dying on the cross

- **Summary**
- Unless you see Jesus as the ultimate Moses ...
 - that his death on the cross is the ultimate liberation ... trying to live our those principles on their own will only strangle you
- First ... anything but serving God is slavery
 - So what do you do?
 - You say
 - "Okay, I'm going to be really good"
 - "I'm going to serve God, I'm going to read the Bible, I'm going to get on a roster, I'm going to give 10% of my money, I'm going to obey the 10 commandments"
 - "I'm going to be really good"
 - What you're doing there is trusting in the quality and quantity of my service to God
 - Yet Jesus says in Mark 10 - *"the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many"*

- You see ... it's not your service that saves you ... it's Jesus service for you that saves you
- And you will stay a slave if you think the quality and quantity of your service is the thing that gets you into heaven
- If you only see the principal of Moses and not the person Moses points us to ... you'll strangle yourself trying live it out

- Secondly ... God is always at work in the hard times, so trust him
- If this is all we have to go on ... it's not enough ... it is just too abstract
 - We'll be left saying "I know God is there and he's working behind the scenes, and I can't see what he's doing ... but I'm just going to trust him"
 - But that's too abstract ... it's too stoic ... it won't sustain you through the hard times

 - What you need to see is Jesus on the cross ... the ultimate place where the very worst thing happened ... and God turned it into good
 - What you need to see is that on the cross ... God seemed absent
 - Which is why Jesus cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"
 - And yet in the cross we see God was doing the very best thing he could be doing for anybody
- Only when I see Jesus dying on the cross for me and getting involved in my suffering and the evil of this world ... can I deal with my own suffering and evil that I face
- I need more than the principles ... I need a person ... I need Jesus

- Thirdly ... we should really care for the outcasts and nobodies of this world
- But without Jesus I'm going to get tired and impatient and lose interest
- The reason a Christian works for social justice is because Jesus shows why he loves the powerless and the rejected
- Jesus salvation for you and I was accomplished by letting go of his power ... not holding onto it
- Jesus salvation is received not by saying
 - "I'm strong Lord, take me in" ... but saying
 - "I'm weak Lord, I need your grace"
- Religion says > "accept me father because I've been very good"
- Christianity says > "accept me father because of what Jesus has done .. I'm a mess ... I'm a failure"
- When you get that ...

- when you know you're loved even though you are a sinner ...
- then and only then will you be will you move out and help the other powerless in underprivileged people in the world in a right way
 - You won't be judgmental
 - You won't look down your nose at them
 - You won't be self righteous; and
 - You won't give up ... because you know Jesus never did that to you
- Only if you see beyond the principles of Moses to the person Moses points to will these things not strangle you

- In Jesus Christ you can truly be free as you serve God
- In Jesus Christ you can truly trust God in your suffering because he has suffered for you
- In Jesus Christ you can truly serve the powerless, because Jesus gave up his power to serve you

PRAY