God Keeps His Promises

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[0:00] If you were to come down and speak through a microphone, I would hear you. If you were to phone me, I would hear you. But if you come up and stand right beside me and speak to me, I won't hear you.

Okay, so that's a dirty trick for a preacher to pray that I can't hear you, but you can hear me. So anyway, God is good all the time.

Absolutely all the time. The great unchangeable I am is who we've just sung about. I apologize to God right now that my face didn't look as though he was the great unchangeable I am.

And I just wonder if any of us were guilty of that as well. I don't know what it is about us in the UK. Okay, but you know, I'm sure our friends from Nigeria here would tell us how to worship God and smile at the same time.

But in Scotland, we don't seem to know how to do that. But there you go. Anyway, let's come to God's word. This is Exodus.

[1:11] We're starting today. A study in Exodus. In many ways, this is... Paul said to the Corinthian church, these things were written down for us, on whom the end of the ages has come.

So if you want to know who is Exodus for, it's for you. It's for me. These things were written down for us. Because if anything, it's like the gospel of the Old Testament.

It's the book of Exodus. It's all about... It's all about bondage and slavery and wickedness and oppression and control and witchcraft and the mighty power of God just cutting like a scythe right through the whole thing and saying, let my people go.

And sure enough, he brings his people into freedom. So Exodus is the gospel in the Old Testament. Let's enjoy getting into it today. So at Exodus chapter 1, verse 1, 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.

[2:40] All of the descendants of Jacob were 70 persons. 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. He said to his people, Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

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, Python 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. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in all kinds of work in the field.

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 Puah, When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and you see them on the birth stool, if it is a son, you shall kill him.

But if it is a daughter, she shall live. But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, Why have you done this and let the male children live? The midwives said to Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.

So God dealt well with the midwives and the people multiplied and grew very strong and because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. 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.

[5:28] Well, folks, these are solemn things that we're reading here. What we're actually doing here, now I need to just realize, switch this on.

There we are. Switch this on as well. Okay, I think, there we are, quick Hebrew lesson.

Now, I'm not setting myself up as a scholar today, not by any means, but we have access to great learning through the scholars who've done all the digging for us. Now, these are the first two words of the Hebrew text from which our English version comes today.

these are the names. Now, what I read to you is not actually the full translation.

These are the names. It's probably what you have in your Bible. Am I right? Hands up if that's it. These are the names. Is that all you've got? Right, okay. Well, actually, the most important word in the Hebrew is not actually represented on your page.

[6:59] Now, that's not because the translators are at fault here. Translators have to make choices all the time as to how they're going to render something into a language other than the original.

and so they've made a choice here but the very first word of the Hebrew text is actually just a tiny wee thing. See if I can.

There we are. Now, that's these, the names. That doesn't appear in the Hebrew. These names. Okay. Right here, you see what's happening.

There's one little letter there that's not translated onto your page. And it sounds like this. It sounds like W. W. W for Willie.

W for William Murdoch. Okay. W. And it's W'ele. W'ele Shabbat. These are the names. But it should translate as and these are the names because what we're actually looking at here and this is so important I think for us to grasp is that Exodus is actually Genesis the sequel.

Okay. It's the sequel to Genesis. It's a straight run. But what's fascinating is that there's a 400 year gap between the narrative of Genesis and what you're being told in Exodus.

so in a sense how does that come about? Let's let's turn back for a moment to to Genesis chapter 15.

Go with me to Genesis chapter 15 and verse 12. Abraham has been worried.

He's been anxious. He's been complaining. He's been saying Lord I'm getting to be old now. You know Ishmael is like 13 years old and that didn't work. You said that Ishmael wasn't going to be the answer to our prayers.

We need I've got no descendants and you know the tradition of the day was that if I don't have any children then I have to make a servant of my household the heir to all my wealth and all my hopes.

[9:24] And this Eliezer of Damascus is going to be the one who inherits everything and God says no no no no you've got it wrong Abraham. Your own son is going to be your heir.

Now Abraham at that point was nearly a hundred years old. Sarah was ninety. So that was one of those sort of hello moments.

you know God is still intending to keep this promise. He's still intending to provide a son and heir for Abraham. Wow what a God we serve.

So God says look I'm going to make a covenant with you but the astonishing thing is the way God makes the covenant at verse 12 we read this Genesis 15 as the sun was going down a deep sleep fell on Abraham and behold dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

Then the Lord said to Abraham know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there and they will be afflicted for four hundred years but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions as for you you shall go to your fathers in peace you shall be buried in a good old age and they shall come back here in the fourth generation for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete when the sun had gone down and it was dark behold a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces now Abraham had been told to bring animals and he had to cut them in half and place a blazing fire pot in between them on that day the

Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying to your offspring I give this land from the river of Egypt that's the Nile to the great river the river Euphrates that's the one in Babylon the land of the Kenites the Kenizzites the Kadmonites the Hittites the Perizzites the Rephaim the Amorites the Canaanites the Girgashites and the Jebusites and God says this is all going to be your family land so in other words Canaan is going to be completely and utterly given to the Jewish nation that blazing fire pot represents God what happened in those days with these covenants was that when they cut the animals in half they would walk between the animals and they would swear to each other their faithfulness to the covenant and the whole idea would be that if either of them broke the covenant they would have done to them what they had done to the animals that was how the covenant worked but in this case what's unique is that God puts Abraham to sleep and only God walks between the pieces only God walks between those pieces only God is taking responsibility for this covenant to succeed and only God is saying

I will pay the price of this covenant this is the astonishing God we serve he's saying to Abraham none of this depends on you Abraham I have sworn by myself none of it depends on Abraham how much did your salvation depend on you we don't buy our own way to heaven okay let's go back now to to Exodus chapter 1 God's covenant promises they really we really have to to consider the character of God that is being revealed in this let's take a look at what's about to be fulfilled 400 years after this promise that he made to

Abraham let's consider what's about to be fulfilled and it's going to start its process through this narrative that Moses is writing about his experiences with the Hebrew people people let's take a look let's take a look at these canaanites God had said to Abraham you'll be brought back here after the fourth generation because the sin of the Amorites is not yet full so God was prepared to give the 400 give the canaanites 400 years of grace before he would pour out his judgment upon them this is so important for us to understand I've had people come to me and say I don't understand God doing such a bloody thing as driving all the Canaanites out of Canaan and sending the Hebrews in to massacre them and leave nothing alive but if people read their Bibles properly they would see that

God is slow to anger and many of us would wait 400 years to deal with a problem as serious as the way the Canaanites were defiling the land if you want to know how the Canaanites lived then go and have a look at the commandments the law that Moses gave to the children of Israel because the commandments are the mirror image the opposite way round to the way the Canaanites lived so when God says to his people you shall not lie with a man as one lies with a woman the Canaanites did when he said you shall not have sex with an animal the Canaanites did this was all the stuff that was going on every day as a natural form of life in Canaan and God takes his people out of the world and he gives them his law and he gives them his teaching and he imparts his character to them and says you shall not you shall not you shall not he's not just commanding them he's enabling them he's making them into different people who will stand out from the world and whose lifestyle will be so very different that there will be light shining in the darkness and people will be drawn to that light because not everybody is happy with sin some people are sick of their sin and they want to find a way out they want to find a way back and so somebody shines the light and they say oh that's what I'm looking for and off they go so judgment is about to fall upon the

Amorites after 400 years judgment is about to fall on Egypt because God had said that the nation that enslaved his people because bear in mind think of the irony of this Egypt owes its very existence to a Jew to a man called Joseph it owes its very existence to it it would have been wiped out like every other nation with seven years of famine had it not been that God raised up Joseph and the Egyptians benefited as much as the Hebrews from the administration of Joseph and his wisdom that God had given him and this very nation that owes its existence to a Jewish man is now after 400 years enslaved the Jewish people there's not much gratitude in that exploitation and as we read mass murder as well what else is about to be fulfilled the promises to Abraham

Isaac and Jacob are about to be fulfilled Abraham was promised the land of Canaan he [18:09] was promised slavery for his descendants can you imagine that imagine God saying quite calmly almost as a throwaway line your descendants will be slaves in a land that's not their own for 400 years we'll come back to that but God says to Abraham I'm going to make you into a very great nation I'm going to give you land I'm going to give you innumerable descendants and the whole earth is going to be blessed through you so actually when you start to read Exodus 1 it should almost be with a sense of breathless anticipation something amazing is unfolding that only

> God can do and only God has the power to make happen why would God promise slavery and not just simply prevent it and for centuries of it what was God doing with that you know God is often inscrutable because we've got finite minds he's got an infinite mind so we don't always understand God's ways at least I don't but God is although he's inscrutable he's never unloving God doesn't switch off his love because you see for God to switch off his love he would have to switch off himself because God is love so God doesn't have moments when he doesn't love anymore and God is not unloving when he just prophesies to

> Abraham your descendants are going to be slaves for 400 years but what is God doing during those 400 years he's making a great nation we read in the chapter that we read today Jacob went into Egypt as a family an extended family of 70 people a wee bit more than 70 if you include the descendants of Joseph but here we are they're so numerous now that a powerful nation because Egypt was not a weak nation at this point in its history Egypt was militarily and commercially strong at this point in its history but here they are and they're afraid of the

Jews they're afraid of the Hebrews why would that be they were a multitude we know they were a multitude in fact we know from numbers that the young the men of 20 years and old were about 650,000 so if you then add in those who were under 20 and you add in the elderly women if you add in the daughters you're really talking about a population of something close to 2 million that's that's the crowd that Moses led out of Egypt what an undertaking I'm glad I didn't have his job but what is God doing during those 400 years he's making a great nation now I'll depend on my accounting friend at the very back there to keep me right if I'm wrong with this but I worked out yesterday that a population explosion over four centuries from 70 people to 2 million people is a percentage increase of about 28,500 percent percent okay now if you if you discovered later on today that your bank account had miraculously increased by 100 percent you would have double in the bank what you've got right now okay just imagine a population expanding from 70 by 28,500 percent it would take 400 years for that to happen but it would happen but you see the blessing of

God on the Hebrew people the descendants of Abraham Isaac and Jacob this is this is absolutely astonishing the population expansion during that period and you begin to understand why Egypt a powerful nation was afraid of these Hebrews who lived within its borders okay just give me a second I need to go back a wee bit so a family becomes a nation Joseph died he had known the promise that was made to Abraham he had also known that there was going to be slavery ahead but when Joseph gave a prediction for the future he predicted that God would visit them and he said and you are to carry my bones up from this place he gave directions about his bones according to

Hebrews 11 22 Joseph's faith in God's character the covenant keeping promise keeping character of God was such that he could look three or four hundred years down the road and say I want my bones to go with you to the land that God will most assuredly give you okay so promises God keeps his promises let's just move through this a wee bit now because Joseph died and he was put in a coffin in Egypt and then four hundred years later we're told there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph well not necessarily four hundred years but over a period of four hundred years the oppression of the Hebrew people built up because what we're actually looking at is that

God is keeping his promises he's actually saying he said he would bring judgment on the nation that they served that afterwards they would come out with great possessions and as this story unfolds you will see that that's exactly what happened but that little word and right at the beginning of the chapter or that should be at the beginning of the chapter says that we need to think in terms of continuity with God because a God who makes promises is a God who guarantees continuity hello let's skip that one again a God who makes promises is a God who guarantees continuity so look down the right side of that slide and you'll see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the line of four hundred years going down through Joseph to Moses and it's an unbroken continuity of God's faithfulness because God keeps his promises and behind all the promises of God is the character of God that's why he's reliable okay

I think we could just take those off the board now if you would Stephen please so question if God has made promises have we believed those promises until we've trusted them answer no you don't believe a promise until you've trusted it never will I leave you never will I forsake you he says so then what do we do how do we trust that promise answer we refuse the lie of unbelief that tells us that we're alone against the storms of life never will I leave you never will I forsake you it's not enough to believe that like it's something in your head it has to become something in your life you have to refuse to believe that you're alone against the storms of life so no matter what happens

God is faithful to his promise has he said no one shall snatch them from my hand is that what the good shepherd said yes it is no one shall snatch them from my father's hand has he said that then we permit no belief to undermine our security the shepherd does not lose his sheep blessed assurance Jesus is mine has he said that he will carry us and care for us even to our very old age while the closing chapters of our lives are fully provided for it doesn't matter what age we are doesn't matter what condition our health is in God has said I even I am he who will carry you even to old age and grey hairs and that's Isaiah 46 3 and 4 if you want to look it up and comfort yourself in front of the mirror later on and Moses

Moses actually acted as executor for Joseph's will Moses took personal responsibility to gather the bones of Joseph and have them carried up from Egypt to Canaan so we really do serve an awesome God God and when we get to verse 8 dark clouds begin to come down and you see prophecy being fulfilled because a new king a king who's completely disconnected from history a king who has no respect for national indebtedness to Joseph a king whose ignorance is in the driving seat begins to impose hardship upon the people of Israel because he's afraid of them but you know Solomon said righteousness exalts a nation but sinners are reproach to any people so when self is on the throne sin is on the throne and sin is a disgrace to a nation and so it was for

Egypt Egypt was brought to disgrace because sin was on the throne and there's a very powerful irony in all of this have a look at verse 9 where Pharaoh talks about the people of Israel you see that on your page it's Pharaoh who's talking about the people of Israel do you know that that's the very first reference in scripture to Israel as a nation and it's on the lips of the man who's trying to destroy them you can almost hear heaven's ironic chuckle as this man talks about the nation of Israel it's Pharaoh who first called them a nation and he's trying to destroy them and they're a nation who can't be destroyed and that's still true today it doesn't mean the Jews are better than other people they're definitely not in fact my good friend

Chuck Cohen says we Jews are just like everybody else only more so and what he means by that is that some of the worst traits in humanity are even worse in the Jews and some of the best traits in humanity are even better in the Jews there is a sense in which the Jewish people is quite unique there's something in their DNA that God has put there if you were to go onto the internet today and look up the list of Nobel Prize winners you'll find hundreds more Jews than of any other race that's just a fact so there's a powerful irony it's Pharaoh who first speaks of the nation of Israel these ironies are all down through history Voltaire the famous French philosopher he said that the Bible would be a dead book it would be ignored by people by the end of his life and by the end of his life the

Bible was being printed in the house in which he'd said that by the Bible society so awesome things in this book but when slavery comes upon a people move to verse 11 and 14 now when slavery comes you see the religion of Babylon is witchcraft Babylon doesn't worship God Babylon worships power Babylon worships control and so it forces submission it forces conformity it removes freedom it imposes draconian regulation the religion of Babylon produces domination oppression suppression David Robertson recently in his podcast was speaking about some of the things that are going on in the world and he was saying that where the security services are normally shadowy figures who inhabit the background of life we don't hear much about them in New Zealand they've come right into the front they're sitting in front of the cameras on TV and they're saying to people you need to beware and listen and watch for telltale signs they could be any of it could be members of your own family watch if you hear people saying things that are clearly against the interests of the nation against the interests of the population if they disagree with well thought out government policy you need to let the police know hello in this country just a few weeks ago a woman was arrested for praying she was standing near an abortion center this country has now brought in special laws that make it illegal for Christians to offer support to women to offer alternatives to women who are approaching an abortion center and may want to consider alternatives to abortion may want to consider having their child adopted or fostered or might need financial help or whatever to bring up their child and these

Christian charity workers are now illegal they're breaking the law if they go anywhere near these abortion centers there's a buffer zone being erected by the law around these centers and this lady was there she was breaking the law in one sense in another sense she wasn't because the center was closed so it wasn't open for business she wasn't carrying any placards she didn't stop anyone in the street she was standing quietly praying and the police came and asked her what she was doing and they had obviously been keeping track of this woman and were able to say that she was known not to live in the vicinity of that abortion clinic so they took her to the station and interviewed her and asked her what she had been thinking excuse me the police have a right to ask you what you're thinking anybody read a book by

George Orwell called 1984 if you haven't go and read it because it's bang up to date and he had a body in his book called the thought police nasty things are coming down the line folks and as Christians we need to decide what our attitude is going to be to these things now there's there's a but that comes up here in verse 17 oh sorry no it's further back but verse 12 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 that you know when God's word says but it absolutely guarantees that your calculations are going to prove wrong when God's word says but your calculations will prove wrong verse 14 says that they treated the people of Israel ruthlessly and I want to tell you this ruthlessness will always attract a payback ruthlessness will always attract a payback and God himself will see to it

Paul said to the Roman church beloved never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord you see we Christians are called to live in and by an opposite spirit to the spirit of the world we're going to be treated like doormats we're going to be abused we're going to be hounded we're going to be persecuted we're going to be hated Jesus said so and he's not going to be proved wrong but we lose when we fight back taking revenge effectively is seeking what belongs to God and that puts us in God's firing line it's not a wise place to be we will not give to Caesar what belongs to God but God has instructed us to give to Caesar what belongs to him and we are commanded to obey the authorities and to live as law abiding citizens we don't have to agree with them we don't have to like their politics we don't have to like their lifestyles or their morality or anything but we do have to be law abiding citizens and they only exception to that is when the government is demanding what belongs to God okay let's move on did I sorry I thought I heard something there my hearing plays tricks on me all the time just now okay verse 15 now here's a dark moment king of

Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives when you serve as a midwife to the Hebrew women see them on the birth stool if it is a son you shall kill him here's women whose task is to bring new life into the world and they're being instructed to make sure that new life doesn't survive birth kill the boys you see people are either inspired by the Holy Spirit or they're inspired by a dark spirit that is not of God there's two kinds of people in the world we need to understand that folks we must not believe the lie of the brotherhood of men that's a humanist lie that is not the scriptural way there are the children of God and there are the children of the devil and if you're moved by the spirit of God you're a child of God if you're not moved by the spirit of God you're a child of the devil no matter how nice you might be scripture doesn't allow us to be nicer than

Jesus on that matter he told some of the most religious people of his day that they were children of the devil and verse 17 has another but you see the midwives feared God and they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them so the world you see never reckons with the fear of the Lord Peter and the apostles said we must obey God rather than men and that's what effectively the midwives are saying we must obey God rather than Pharaoh and so because they put God first never mind let's just skim over the fact that they told a lie to Pharaoh we'll just skim over that because they didn't really have much choice in that situation did they sometimes evil forces people down a narrow path where you've got to choose between one evil and another and they chose to tell a lie but effectively what they were trying to do was to obey God rather than

Pharaoh and God saw these women he saw their hearts and he said I'm going to bless these midwives and he gave them families so we praise the Lord for that now we come to the end of our passage here and it gets really really dark and it's just the last verse 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 Pharaoh's message to the nation is we're all in this together everyone needs to do their bit for the nation you know kill the kids that's

Pharaoh's philosophy kill the kids kill the boys this is how you work for Egypt this is how you preserve the welfare of your nation Germany had a terrible time before the second world war they had a thing called the Weimar Republic people were taking barrel loads of Deutsch marks to just buy their bread for the week because inflation went completely berserk and they were in a terrible commercial mess unemployment was through the roof and Nazi propaganda blamed the Jews says if you care about the welfare of Germany we have to do something about these Jews they're the ones that fought here they blamed the Jews for Weimar they blamed them for everything they were depicted on posters all over the nation posters that showed them as sometimes as rodents sometimes as animals sometimes as pigs and always as villains and Dr.

Goebbels who masterminded the propaganda said cynically if you tell people something often enough they will believe it in 52 years since the abortion law was passed in 1967 9 million 446 068 babies have been aborted that works out at one unborn baby every three minutes now originally I mean even David Steele the MP who promoted the 1967 bill he has since said that it's the greatest regret of his life that he pushed that because in all good faith he thought he was doing something to stop back street abortions that's what he thought he was doing he didn't know he was being used by a lobby that saw a multi-million pound industry growing out of the desire for abortions so that abortion is treated as a form of birth control or family planning so think of this folks pharaoh made the destruction of Jewish boys a test of citizenship that's effectively what it was if you're a good

Egyptian you will see to it that no Hebrew male child lives well folks that's the world in which we live that's the world in which we offer Jesus Christ the Lord of life to a world that deals in mass murder all the time abortion is being offered by the West by big Western companies it's being offered to the third world countries to developing nations so folks when your test of citizenship comes we're going to have to decide where we stand are we like those midwives who will say we must obey God rather than men because tests of citizenship are coming folks they are coming here we're being tested all the time the boundaries of our freedom are being pushed and flattened in some cases all the time so we need to be alert we need to be open to what

God may be saying to us but one thing is absolutely certain the answer to all the evils of this world is the gospel of Jesus Christ that's the answer we preach Christ crucified we preach Christ risen do you realize that our population is almost totally terrified of dying and death and Jesus has conquered death so we preach Christ risen from the dead and we'll get people's attention instead of that right now much of the church is preaching green issues you know save the planet recycle your rubbish have vegan food instead of meat and all the rest of it it's all about saving the planet our church leaders in many ways are now a disgrace but we need to keep our eyes on the goal you see the gospel of Jesus

Christ is completely and utterly transforming when Jesus moves into a person's life he turns them 180 degrees Jesus Christ changes the people who come to him he doesn't say to us go and change your life and then I'll have something to do with you he says come as you are come as you are and I will fix you I will sort you I will heal you I will transform you and all that's happening in your life right now all the nasty stuff that you wish wasn't happening right now the reason for that is the same reason that there were 400 years of slavery for the Hebrews God is creating you in the likeness of his son he's going to populate heaven with people who bear a striking resemblance to his son that's the glory of the gospel that's our hope let's pray living

God we we rejoice in you there is there is no one like you in all the earth we we are so utterly dependent on you Lord but what a joy it is father to be weak and ineffective in this world what a joy it is to be able to say Lord all we can bring you is a truck load of weakness we can't bring you anything else we're ineffective we're useless we can't change anything we can't move anything we can't transform anything we can't even change ourselves but we come to you oh Lord God in Jesus name and we bless you for the day that you saved us and brought us to Jesus as our teacher and our great transformer we bless you for the day and hour that you spoke the word of life into us and so father we pray as the tests of citizenship build up in our culture today as the evils of ancient

[49:52] Egypt manifest again in modern times so we pray in Jesus name that you will help us to remember that you are the covenant keeping God the promise keeping God the God who says and it happens the God who speaks to nothing and makes it something the God who takes a man who thought he was a somebody in Pharaoh's palace and put him into the wilderness for 40 years until he felt like he was a nobody and then you took another 40 years and showed Moses what you can do with a somebody who thinks he's a nobody and we bless you and praise you for that Lord please take us little nobodies today and help us to see what you can do with us in our day for the glory of your name and for Jesus to be exalted on our lips and in our lives amen amen