

God's Rescue Begins

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 June 2019

Preacher: Mark Chew

[0 : 0 0] well let me just pray for us as we look at God's word Father thank you for your word thank you that you've given it to us so that we might hear your voice come to know you and your son and find life in his name we pray this in Jesus name Amen they say Aslan is on the move perhaps has already landed and now a very curious thing happened none of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do but the moment the beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different perhaps it has something sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says something which you don't understand but in the dream it feels as if it had some enormous meaning either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing you could get into that dream again it was like that now at the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside

Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delicious strain of music had just floated by her and Lucy got that feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer now many of you would know what I've just read hands up if you know yeah it's part of the second book of the Chronicles of Narnia the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe many of you probably know the story by heart and if you haven't read the Chronicles I suggest that you do it's a great read but in this second book Narnia is trapped in an endless winter under the spell of the Wicked Witch but word has gone around that Aslan the lion is on the move and they're excited because if that's true then things are about to change the rescue of Narnia is finally underway and that's the feeling I get when I read the start of Exodus that God too is on the move and Israel is about to be rescued but unlike Narnia the people of Israel are unaware of this we are however privy to it because the writer of Exodus has revealed it to us now as Daniel has recapped we left Genesis last year

Joseph had just brought his father Jacob and his brothers to live in the land of Egypt although initially a slave Joseph had risen to second in command in Egypt used by God to prepare the land for the coming famine but years later after Joseph had died a new king rises to power who knew nothing of Joseph instead this new pharaoh was afraid of the Israelites they had become too numerous for him and he's afraid that if war breaks out they'll join his enemies fight against him and leave the country and so he drives them into forced labor making them build Pithom and Ramses and store cities for him things then are not good for Israel at the start of Exodus and yet what we'll see is that God is clearly on the move in spite of the suffering of Israel he's at work preparing behind the scenes and things are about to change for his people and so here in chapter 1 we're first of all given a macro view of God on the move and that's the first point in the outline so first in verses 1 to 4 we see God has already been at work multiplying his people from 70 to many it says in verse 1 these are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob each with his own family Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin Dan and Naphtali Gad and Asher the descendants of Jacob numbered 70 in all Joseph was already in Egypt but then from that 70 they grow and they repeatedly were told just how fruitful God has made them now Joseph and his brothers and all his brothers and all that generation died but Israelites were exceedingly fruitful they multiplied greatly increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them now this is all creation language from Genesis 1 where God had commanded humans to be fruitful and multiply and so even in the intervening years before now God has blessed Israel in fruitfulness so that they can fulfill his creation mandate but it's also language from God's promise to Abraham Isaac and Jacob just like this one which I've got on the screen Genesis chapter 17 and verse 4

God said to Abraham as for me this is my covenant with you you will be the father of many nations no longer will you be called Abraham your name will be Abraham for I have made you a father of many nations I will make you very fruitful I will make nations of you and kings will come from you so from one man Abraham God made them into a small nation of 70 by the time of Jacob and these were just the males by the way and then from 70 has come a nation so numerous the land was filled with them Pharaoh's actions to kill off the Israelites wasn't just evil in itself but it was also a direct affront to God's creation mandate and his promises to Abraham and so God will have none of it which is why in verse 12 the more they the Israelites were oppressed can you see the more they multiplied and spread that's God's doing so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly they made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly

[6 : 51] God was stymieing Pharaoh's evil scheme even as Pharaoh was making it harsh for them no God was making the Israelites even more numerous but Pharaoh he refuses to go away quietly so if indirect extermination doesn't work he'll use a more direct method and so he said to the Hebrew midwives Shipra and Pua verse 16 when you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery strew if you see that a baby is a boy kill him boys being those that grow up to be fighting men but if it is a girl let her live but again God thwarts his plans verse 17 the midwives however feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do they let the boys live to not do what the king had told them was actually a very brave thing these women were putting their lives on the line but when the king questioned them they answered

Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive it was a lie but God looked at their hearts and was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became more numerous and because the midwives feared God he gave them families of their own God was using these two women to fulfill his plan they were becoming his agents and they were known to him which is why their names are recorded for us still known to us these many thousands of years later whereas this supposedly powerful pharaoh has no name he is a nobody in God's eyes well despite his repeated failure pharaoh still takes one more roll of the die verse 22 he gave the order to all his people every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the now but let every girl live friends put yourself in the shoe of an Israelite whether it's a slave in the field perhaps or a pregnant mother fearing for her child's safety would you have thought then that God was on the move that actually he had everything under control it's hard isn't it when life gets tough say we can't find work or our family relationships are broken or we're deep in depression or feeling isolated or neglected when others around appear successful and they're finding life partners and perhaps you can't it's hard to see that God's plan is at work in our lives isn't it and yet we see here that God can be on the move even when our present circumstances suggest otherwise things are not always as they seem to us and so where is God heading with Israel well we'll discover more in chapter 2 and before I go and I'll just invite

Karen back up and she'll read chapter 2 for us I'll leave the Bible here now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son when she saw that he was a fine child she hid him for three months but when she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch then she placed a child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile his sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe and her attendants were walking along the riverbank she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it she opened it and saw the baby he was crying and she felt sorry for him this is one of the Hebrew babies she said then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you yes go she answered so the girl went and got the baby's mother

Pharaoh's daughter said to her take this baby and nurse him for me and I will pay you so the woman took the baby and nursed him when the child grew older she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son she named him Moses saying I drew him out of the water one day after Moses had grown up he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew one of his own people looking this way and that and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand the next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting he asked the one in the wrong why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew the man said who are you who made you ruler and judge over us are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian then Moses was afraid and thought what I did must have become known when

Pharaoh heard of this he tried to kill Moses but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian where he sat down by a well now a priest of Midian had seven daughters and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock some shepherds came along and drove in the way but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock when the girls returned to their father he asked them why have you returned so early today they answered an Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds he even drew water for us and watered the flock and where is he their father asked the daughters why did you leave him invite him to have something to eat Moses agreed to stay with the man who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage Zipporah gave birth to a son and Moses named him Gershom saying I have become a foreigner in a foreign land during that long period the king of Egypt died the Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to

[13:20] God God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham with Isaac and with Jacob so God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them thanks Karen I wonder if you take a look at your outline because in there I say that in chapter two we now move from a macro view of God on the move to a zoomed in view of God on the move he's still on the move but now in the life of one child or person and this child is chosen because he will become God's rescuer of Israel from Egypt but of course his life is intertwined with events at the macro level because of Pharaoh's edict his life was also in danger just like every other Hebrew boy and yet God's hand is at work even in this one child keeping him safe and God does it

I think when we read this story with such great irony and humor so first this child is kept safe in the Nile the river of death the very place Pharaoh had ordered the boys to be thrown into verse 2 when after his mom could no longer hide him she got out of a papyrus basket or actually the word is ark the same Hebrew word that's used in Genesis for Noah's ark she uses an ark for him and coated it with tar and pitch then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile and then the sister stood at the distance to see what would happen and that's ironic isn't it because the now the place of death becomes a place of safety or refuge for this boy and then next in verse 5 who should come along one day to bathe but Pharaoh's daughter another twist because the king's own daughter feels sorry for the child and spares him against her father's orders and then what happens the boy is reunited with the mother because the boy's sister comes along and asks shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you yes go she answered not knowing what's happening so the girl went and got her baby's mother his baby got the baby's mother

Pharaoh's daughter said to her take this baby and nurse him for me and get this I will pay you so not only is he spared not only does his mother end up caring for him but she does it on full child care benefits pretty good isn't it and then when finally he's older he returns to Pharaoh's daughter to be raised in Pharaoh's own household the martyr Stephen in Acts said he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians again can you see God's sense of humor because this chosen rescuer of God is kept safe right under the nose of Pharaoh with all his private school fees paid for not bad eh well finally we discover this boy's name Moses so called because Pharaoh's daughter drew him out of the water God's rescuer was kept safe in the now what is supposed to be the river of death he's kept safe in

Pharaoh's household the ruler of death but now in the rest of chapter 2 God has to then send Moses to Midian and I think it's to keep Moses safe from himself for you see in verse 11 when Moses had grown up one day he goes to his own people and watch them hard at labor probably guilt has afflicted him as he saw his own people suffer while he lived in luxury and did nothing about it and so when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew one of his own people that phrase again he could take it no longer and so when he thought no one was looking he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand not very smart is it to hide someone in the sand which blows away but anyway this was Moses' idea of rescuing his own people by violent murder and brute force it wasn't God's way and so it backfires verse 13 because the next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting he asked the one in the wrong why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew the man said who made you ruler and judge over us are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian again the irony is that his own people didn't thank him for it instead they saw him just like their Egyptian slave masters lording it over them and then worse they reported him to Pharaoh who tries then to kill him and so Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian where he sat down by a well but lo and

behold just like Jacob and Isaac before him God finds him a wife through an encounter at a well her name is Zipporah one of the seven daughters of Ruel a Midianite priest so Moses comes to their aid this is the first rescue that actually works for him while they're harassed by shepherds draws water for them and their flock and gets invited back to

[18 : 59] Ruel's house cut a long story short he and Zipporah get married and they have a son Moses names him Gershom in verse 22 saying I have become a foreigner in a foreign land now normally when you name a child you put a lot of thought into it and the name often reflects a parent's hope for their child at least that's what Alyssa and I tried to do with ours both the English and the Chinese names but for Moses his name his son's name was actually a window into his own soul here was a man who felt ostracized he had grown up among the Egyptians not being one of them and when he tried to save his own people they rejected him and now he's far away in Midian among a foreign people even though he's married to one of them and so poor Moses he feels like he doesn't belong anywhere but even here we can see

God's purpose at work because I think God was teaching this would-be rescue of his that his people's salvation will come not from overt power or privilege but by the hand of God God will use Moses not because he's strong or able or he's got the right connections no God will use him despite his lack of strength and ability and strangely the name Gershom I think will also be a reminder to Moses that all Israel were foreigners in a foreign land and their liberation will come not in Egypt but from Egypt home for them will not be in Egypt but in the land God promised their forefathers well all that still lays ahead over the next months as we look at Exodus but God is still on the move but not as

Moses or Israel expects in the meantime the chapter closes in verse 23 like this during that long period the king of Egypt died the Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham with Isaac and with Jacob so God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them and so the perspective that we are to have in relation to Israel's suffering and Moses' testing is this God cares for his people he hears he looks upon them with concern and he does all that because he's motivated by his prior promises God remembered his covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob that's the key verse there and as

I've said before during our series in Genesis it doesn't mean that God had somehow forgotten up to now and then he remembers no rather God has what it says by God remembering is that God has his promises in mind as he's acting God is moved to act by the faithfulness that he has to his word he remembers that he's promised to make Israel into a great nation to bless them promised land now as we look out just put Genesis 12 1 to 3 up again you see though that his covenant to Abraham is actually much bigger than that isn't it it's not just about making Israel great but actually using her to be a blessing so that all peoples on the earth right at the bottom will be blessed through him and so for us today many of us are not Jews this event in Israel's history is still relevant to us because it is through the rescue of

Israel and the making of her as a great nation that we too are and will be blessed by God and many of you will know that this blessing comes eventually through God's son Jesus the son of Abraham who came to earth not simply to rescue us from physical slavery but from slavery to sin by dying on the cross for us and so I dare say that when God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant he didn't just have saving Israel in mind but he had the salvation of the whole world through his son in mind as well when he acted and if you're wondering what God is up to today then this is still the thing that is moving him to act him remembering his covenant just take a look at some of the New Testament passages that I've got on the screen it's filled with God's promises to save us by his son

[24 : 10] John 3 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life 1 Timothy here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I'm the worst Paul says and then one more 1 John 4 9 this is how God showed his love among us he sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him you know people may think that there are a lot of other more important things going on in the world climate change Brexit the trade wars between China and Trump's America but actually these are all mere sideshows compared to what God is doing through his son Christ's victory on the cross is already secured

Jesus is already risen from the dead and now all that is left for God to do is to gather all those who are his people those who will believe in his son that is what God is doing at the macro level of history likewise when we zoom in on each of our lives our individual lives we may sometimes think that there are other priorities for us in life like to work out who we will marry or what career we are going to embark on or whether even God is going to call us into gospel ministry but actually under the lordship of his son because as he promised Abraham and fulfilled it in Christ it is in his son that we achieve the full blessings that he has promised and so Paul expresses it like this in Romans chapter 8 verse 28 and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose for those

God for each of us as members of Christ's body God's big agenda for us is to conform us to the image of his son the head and when Paul says all things if you read the rest of chapter 8 he spells out that these include suffering and testing as well just like Israel and Moses everything works for good for those who love him who have been called according to his purpose and so there may be times in our lives like Israel where we may not understand what we're going through what purpose do our trials serve you know it's in those times that we can take comfort that God remembers his promises to us that he cares for us despite our circumstances and his bigger purpose for our lives is to conform us through whatever we're going through to his son and so sometimes instead of wondering how and when our suffering will end because

God may sometimes choose not to tell us what is better to ask is how is what's happening to us helping us to conform to the likeness of his son yes it's still okay to groan and cry out just like Israel but unlike Israel we know who to cry out to don't we to God and we know that God hears us we know that he promises to remember his covenant and that he will be moved to act and to save us to bring us to glory after all as we look back God has already been on the move hasn't he not just here in Exodus but in his son 2000 years ago he has already given us his son who has died for us and has now risen in glory and so if he's already done that then he will bring the rest of what his promised to completion not only in world history but in each of our lives and what we need to do is then keep trusting

God to keep that promise to use even the trials in our lives to make us more like Jesus let's pray Father thank you for hearing us when we cry out to you remember us and your promises to us in your word help us to trust that your purpose through thick and thin is to make us more like your son Jesus thank you that we are blessed because of him in Jesus name we pray amen