



5

Bondage in Egypt

Key Themes

- God's plans are perfect.
- God is faithful to His promises.

Key Passages

- Genesis 15:13–16, 50:24–26; Hebrews 11:22; Exodus 1:1–14, 2:23–25; 1 Samuel 12:8

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the promise of a land given to Abraham with the deliverance of the Israelites.
- Describe God's answer to the groans and cries of the Israelites in Egypt.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, "Will God abandon the Israelites in Egypt?"



Studying God's Word

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The Israelites cried out because of their affliction in Egypt. God in His mercy heard their cry and acknowledged them, showing Himself faithful and His plans perfect.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: What Did God Promise?

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Students will Look up Scriptures to find out what God promised and to whom.

- Print one What Did God Promise? worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.



Activity: The Israelite Midwives

page 8

Students will write a summary, from memory, of the interaction between the Israelite midwives and Pharaoh. Then they will read the account and note any false notions they had about the text.

- Print one The Israelite Midwives worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this lesson, read Genesis 49:29–50:26; Exodus 1:7–14; Exodus 2:23–25.

Joseph's life as recorded in Genesis is an amazing display of God's sovereignty over every circumstance—good or bad—and His faithfulness throughout generations to keep His covenant and deliver His people to the Promised Land. Scripture tells us how the promise originally made to Abraham (Genesis 15:18) passed on to Isaac (Genesis 26:3–4), to Jacob (Genesis 35:12), to Joseph (Genesis 48:21), and now to the Israelite nation (Genesis 50:24).

After blessing his sons, Jacob died, and was taken by his family back to Canaan to be buried with his fathers. After Jacob's death and burial (Genesis 49:33–50:14), Joseph demonstrated that the reconciliation he enjoyed with his brothers was sincere—and not merely out of respect for his father (Genesis 50:15). Joseph had always trusted God, who turned the evil done against him to good. Joseph's faith in God resonated in his response to his brothers,

“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Genesis 50:20–21).

Would this lesson that Joseph learned so well and so graciously pass to his family and sustain them through the difficulties to come? For we know that after Joseph died (Genesis 50:26) and a new king arose who did not know Joseph (Exodus 1:8), things got bad for the Israelites. This new king was intimidated by their great numbers; he ordered them into slavery and forced them to carry heavy burdens, building cities and bearing much suffering (Exodus 1:9–11). It was during their slavery and afflictions that the Bible tells us the Israelites began to groan because of their bondage and to cry out. God, in His mercy and faithfulness, looked upon them, heard their cries, acknowledged them, and remembered His covenant (Exodus 2:23–24).

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Because of the lack of historical records, there are some Bible critics who argue that the Israelites were never in Egypt. Let's consider a couple of things. First of all, God's Word gives us an extensive account of this journey. His Word is true, infallible, and inerrant—He cannot lie. We cannot discount any part of it. If we do so, we open the door to disbelieving all of it.

Second, Egyptian records are far from complete, with close to no records being recovered from the Nile Delta, which was the scene of these events.

Third, because Egyptian history did not allow for negative events to be recorded, we would not expect to have the Exodus of more than two million slaves, the devastation to the country by supernatural plagues,

the plundering of the wealthy by the slaves, and the destruction of the Egyptian army recorded. No, this was not a time of national pride for the Egyptians—and it appears they had no intention of leaving any record of it for future generations.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As we consider a look at history and how it relates to the Exodus, we remember that this was a real event. And because we rely on Scripture to be our final authority and our foundation, we start there and then determine whether God has allowed us to find evidence that confirms His inerrant Word.

In the case of the Exodus we have determined some things that confirm what God's Word records. According to the new chronology of Egypt, which considers that many of the Egyptian kings had overlapping reigns, the Israelites would have been in Egypt during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties. Based on this fact and the chronology of Egyptian pharaohs, many scholars believe that Pharaoh Sesotris III could very likely be the Egyptian ruler who arose after Joseph died and began the oppression of the Hebrews. He was the fifth king of the Twelfth Dynasty, and was recognized for the cities he built in the delta, including Bubastis, Qantir, and Raameses—built by Israelite slaves (see Exodus 1:11).

We also know that a later Pharaoh, Amenemhet III, built two pyramids for himself, one at Dahsur and

the other at Hawarra in the Faiyum Oasis. The latter was built of sun-dried mud bricks, and the outside was faced with smooth white stones. It is likely that these pyramids were also built by Israelite slave labor while they were oppressed (Exodus 5:7).

When Amenemhet died, his daughter, Sobekneferu, succeeded him, but she only ruled for four years, and with her death came the end of the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty. The Hebrews remained in servitude into the Thirteenth Dynasty, but their prophesied time in Egypt was close to an end (Genesis 15:13–14). Now it was God who would act to deliver them and give us one of the greatest pictures of redemption in the Old Testament.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, I come to you with the groans and suffering of my life. I know you have a purpose for my circumstances and will be faithful to complete the work you have begun in me. You will glorify your name as you complete your perfect plans. I thank you for this opportunity to present your truth to the students under my care. Please work to soften their hearts to receive your Word. Bring them into the kingdom of the Son you love.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.



Review

In last week's lesson we went on a whirlwind tour through Joseph's life. We saw God's sovereign hand in sending Joseph into slavery, sending him to prison, and raising him to the second in command over Egypt. Through all of his trials, Joseph was obedient to God and his faithfulness was rewarded as he found favor in the eyes of his masters—eventually becoming a ruler in Egypt.

In all that he faced, Joseph recognized that God had used him to save the lives of millions of people, including his family and the brothers who had sold him as a slave.

Joseph didn't seek to take revenge. He knew that was God's job, not his. The forgiveness and kindness he showed toward his brothers give us a great example to follow and remind us of how Christ has treated us.

Despite our rebellion against God, He has forgiven us through Christ's work and adopted us as His children to provide for us and bless us even as we face various trials. We can praise God for his mercy toward us and His sovereign control over this world—every detail and circumstance.



- Write on the board, "Will God abandon the Israelites in Egypt?"



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

As we transition from the book of Genesis to Exodus, let's read Genesis 50:24–26 together to keep some key ideas in perspective. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? **Who was speaking to whom in this passage?** *Joseph was speaking to the children of Israel.*
- ? **What condition was Joseph in?** *He was about to die at 110 years old.*
- ? **What did Joseph reassure his brothers of?** *He assured them that God would take them to the land of Canaan.*
- ? **What did Joseph ask of his family?** *That they take his bones to Canaan when God took them out of Egypt.*
- ? **What phrase is repeated in this passage?** *God will surely visit you.*

Genesis 50:24–26

- Students should turn to page 35 in their Student Guides.

Turn to Hebrews 11:22. If your Bible has cross-references, that is probably one that is mentioned. *Have someone read the passage.*

- ? **How does Hebrews 11:22 help us understand Genesis 50?** *It affirms that Joseph had faith in the future departure of the Israelites and instructed them to take his bones with them.*

You might also see cross-references to Genesis 15:13–16, 26:3, 35:12, 46:4, and others. These are all places we find the promises of a land, a people, and a blessing given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Joseph had faith in God—that He would fulfill what He had promised.

The burial instructions from Joseph are similar to the instructions Israel gave to his sons—to be buried in the cave in the field Abraham bought to bury Sarah, where Isaac and Rebekah were buried, as was Leah (Genesis 49:29–33).

- ? **What other similarity is there in the burial of Joseph and Israel according to Genesis 50:1–3?** *Both Israel and Joseph were embalmed by the Egyptians.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about God?** *Joseph trusted in God's faithfulness to fulfill the promise He had given.*

Discover the Truth

The children of Israel, as we will commonly refer to them from this point on, prospered in Goshen after having been saved from the famine. Joseph knew God's promises and looked expectantly to their fulfillment. He sought to assure his family of those truths as he was dying. That was a reassurance they would soon need, as we will see in the first chapter of Exodus.



READ THE WORD

Let's read Exodus 1:1–14 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **How does the passage begin?** *It starts with a recap of how the children of Israel came to Egypt, including each of the 12 brothers.*
- ? **What had happened to Joseph and his brothers?** *They had all died.*
- ? **What is unique about the description in verse 7?** *It repeats the adjectives that describe the abundance of the Israelites. This is a literary device used for emphasis and should remind us of the promise made to Abraham of having many descendants.*
- ? **What turn in the narrative takes place in verse 8?** *A king who did not know Joseph came to power, so there is a jump forward in time.*
- ? **What was the new king afraid of?** *He feared that the Israelites might overthrow them in a war.*

➤ Brief recaps are often found in historical accounts.

- ? **How did this Pharaoh deal with the Israelites?** *He made them slaves, afflicting them with great burdens.*
- ? **What did the slaves build?** *The cities of Pithom and Raamses.*
- ? **What happened as the Israelites were oppressed?** *They grew even more so that the Egyptians feared them more.*
- ? **What type of labor were the Israelites forced to do?** *Their lives were made bitter with rigorous work in brick and mortar construction and farm labor.*

Discover the Truth

Genesis 15:13–16

The Israelites had been made slaves under a new Pharaoh. This should not have come as a surprise—God had told Abraham that his descendants would be in bondage. Listen as I read Genesis 15:13–16. *Read the passage aloud.*

God had told Abraham of the bondage, but He had also told him that the nation would be judged and that the Israelites would leave with great possessions. As we move through the book of Exodus, we will see God fulfill that promise.

God’s wisdom is obvious throughout this entire series of events. He knows what He has planned to do and He has ordained the timing of all of the events involved. Joseph, like his fathers, trusted in God to fulfill His promises in the way that God saw fit. Of all of the patriarchs, he is the one who demonstrates the most patience in waiting on the Lord to bring about His promises.



Wise

(Refer to Attributes poster)



What Did God Promise?

MATERIALS

- What Did God Promise? worksheet for each student
- What Did God Promise? answer key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the What Did God Promise? worksheets. There are five Scriptures referenced. Students should answer the question, "Who was this promise made to?"

We know God is faithful to His promises. But in today's lesson, the Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians. I wonder if they doubted God and the promises He made so many years before.

I want you to take these worksheets, read the verses listed under Part 1, and answer the question, "Who was this promise made to?"

You can have the students work in teams, individually, or fill in the worksheet together as a class.

Once everyone is finished filling in Part 1, you can proceed to Part 2.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Is everyone finished? Now let's move on to Part 2. When I ask the question, I want you all to tell me the answer and fill in the blanks that are there. OK?

? What did God promise Abraham? *Land. Fill in the blank on question 1.*

? What did God promise Isaac? *Land. Fill in the blank on question 2.*

? What did God promise Jacob? *Land. Fill in the blank on question 3.*

? What promise did Jacob remind Joseph of? *Land. Fill in the blank on question 4.*

? What promise did Joseph remind the children of Israel of? *Land. Fill in the blank on question 5.*

? What was the land they were all waiting for? *Canaan! Fill in the blank on question 6.*

Yes. Each of these men believed that they would one day own the land of Canaan.

? Let's do a little more digging here. Look on the timeline under the year 2000 BC. Where is Joseph located on our timeline? *1728 BC. Where is his great-grandfather Abraham? 1921 BC. His grandfather Isaac? 1896 BC. His father Jacob, also called Israel? 1836 BC. Allow students to point out the patriarchs on the Seven C's Timeline.*

When God saved Joseph's brothers during the famine, it was all a part of His plan to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Joseph. However, the children of Israel were a long way from Canaan—in fact they were suffering under slavery.





The Israelite Midwives

MATERIALS

- The Israelite Midwives worksheet for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

- ? How many of you have heard the account from Exodus 1 about the midwives and Pharaoh’s edict to kill the male children? *Ask for a show of hands.*

Pass out the Israelite Midwives worksheet. What I would like you to do is use this worksheet to think through this account. You can work in pairs if you like, and answer the questions. Think about what ideas you already have about this account—your preconceived notions—and then write a short summary. After writing the summary, read the account and work through the questions and we will discuss them in a few minutes.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? As you wrote your summary, what were some of the details you forgot? *Accept various answers.*
- ? Did you add any information to your summary? *Accept various answers.*

Many people think that this passage teaches that the midwives lied to Pharaoh and that God rewarded them for their lie. However, that is an idea that is not found

in the text. Nothing in the passage says that the midwives were present at births where they chose not to murder the babies. There is no reason not to take their statements at face value.

- ? Why do many people consider this passage a contradiction or a proof that the Bible contains errors? *If the midwives lied and lying is a sin, then God rewarding them would be an inconsistent action.*
- ? If someone were to suggest this is a contradiction, what is the first thing you should do? *Assure them that the Bible cannot contain errors since it is written by God. Then, ask them to read the passage with you and point out where it says that the midwives lied. This will show them that they have not carefully examined their own claim.*

Often, people just mindlessly repeat ideas they have heard from others, but they have never tried to look to the Bible to resolve the issue on their own. Opening God’s Word and reading it with them allows us to show them the trust we place in it. We don’t need to be afraid of people’s attacks on the Word—they will always fail.

As we stand prepared to give an answer for what we believe, we can also use these opportunities to show them the hope we have in Christ. If we just rebut the objections and never point to Christ we have not offered them a hope of



READ THE WORD

Let's read Exodus 2:23–25 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Exodus 2:23–25

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **What happened to the pharaoh who had enslaved the Egyptians?** *He died.*
- ? **How much time passed?** *It is not clear from this passage. Piecing other details together, we know that Moses was 40 when he left Egypt (Acts 7:23) and he returned when he was 80 (Exodus 7:7), so somewhere between 40 and 80 years had passed from the enslavement under the previous Pharaoh.*
- ? **What response did the Israelites have?** *They groaned and cried out because of their bondage.*
- ? **To whom did they cry out?** *The text does not say. Caution the students about reading into the text rather than looking at what is clearly stated.*
- ? **According to 1 Samuel 12:8, who did the Israelites cry out to?** *The Lord.*
- ? **What four responses did God have to the cry of the Israelites?** *1) He heard their groaning; 2) He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; 3) He looked upon the Israelites; 4) He acknowledged their cries.*
- ? **What is going to happen as the account of the Israelites moves forward?** *Knowing the predicted outcome, the Israelites will be freed from their slavery. This is also hinted at in the text—as God acknowledges their cry, we expect Him to respond and fulfill His promises.*

► Be careful not to bring outside ideas into the text.

1 Samuel 12:8

Discover the Truth

The children of Israel had been enslaved and were calling out to God to free them from their bondage. We know that God had already told Abraham that this bondage would end. Since these events are only a few generations removed from Joseph, the knowledge of the promised inheritance was surely present with the elders of Israel.

God was preparing to send a deliverer. In fact, we skipped over the birth of Moses in chapter two and we will talk about that in a couple weeks. We know that God is faithful and merciful and He had heard the cries of the Israelites.

Let's talk about some of the extrabiblical evidences that support a large number of Hebrews having been enslaved in Egypt. Next week we are going to look more closely at some of the differences in chronology seen in the biblical text and historical re-creations from archaeology.

According to the new chronology of Egypt, which considers that many of the Egyptian kings had overlapping reigns, the Israelites would have been in Egypt during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties. Based on this

MERCIFUL
FAITHFUL

fact and the chronology of Egyptian Pharaohs, many scholars believe that Pharaoh Sesostris III could very likely be the Egyptian ruler who arose after Joseph died and began the oppression of the Hebrews. He was the fifth king of the Twelfth Dynasty, and was recognized for the cities he built in the delta, including Bubastis, Qantir, and Raamses—built by Israelite slaves (see Exodus 1:11).

We also know that a later Pharaoh, Amenemhet III, built two pyramids for himself, one at Dahsur and the other at Hawarra in the Faiyum Oasis. The latter was built of sun-dried mud bricks, and the outside was faced with smooth white stones. It is likely that these pyramids were also built by Israelite slave labor while they were oppressed (Exodus 5:7). This would be the pharaoh who took power at some point after the birth of Moses and the death of the king recorded in Exodus 2:23.

When Amenemhet died, his daughter, Sobekneferu, succeeded him, but she ruled for only four years, and with her death came the end of the 12th Egyptian Dynasty. The Hebrews remained in servitude into the 13th Dynasty, but their prophesied time in Egypt was close to an end (Genesis 15:13–14). Now it was God who would act to deliver them and give us one of the greatest pictures of redemption in the Old Testament.

Next week, we will look at some of the particulars of the biblical and historical chronologies and where things like the pyramids and the Sphinx fit in.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

With the arrival of Israel and his family in Egypt, the multiplying of the descendants promised to Abraham had begun . . . but they were in the wrong land! To add to that, the new Pharaoh who took over Egypt after the Israelite people had grown in Goshen oppressed them greatly. He had no connection to Joseph or to what Joseph had done to save Egypt—and the region—from famine. He had decided the Israelites were a threat and he wanted to eliminate that threat. He was even willing to order the murder of the male children born to the Israelites to keep them from increasing.

But God had another plan in place. In spite of the oppression, the Israelites continued to grow. This was all part of God's perfect plan to

establish them as a nation in the Promised Land. A deliverer would come from within their nation and he could lead them out of bondage.

As we will talk about later, this is a picture of what Christ has done for sinners. We are here in this cursed world in bondage to sin, and Christ came as a man to lead us out of bondage and offer us a new hope of freedom from sin and, ultimately, a place with Him in heaven.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What have we learned about God from His actions toward the Israelites?** *He was gracious to take them to Egypt to save them from the famine. He gave them the gift of large families and a productive life in Goshen. He directed those plans to bring about the promises He had made. He was about to show great mercy to the Israelites by releasing them from their bondage.*
- ? **How was God's timing evident in the bondage of the Israelites and what comfort can we draw from that example?** *God did not work according to the timing that the Israelites would have desired, but He allowed them to suffer for a time. We can trust that the timing of our trials is under God's control and that He will deliver us at the appropriate time. He will also give us the grace to bear the trial.*
- ? **In what ways can we relate our experiences in life to what the Israelites experienced in Egypt?** *Living in a sinful world, we will experience harm from others. Rather than seeking revenge, we can call on God to liberate us from the situation trusting that He will do so.*
- ? **There are those who claim that the account of the midwives discredits the Bible. Why is it important to never set the Bible aside when discussing ideas like this with others?** *If we leave the Bible out of the argument and try to reason apart from it, we have lost the argument by admitting that the Bible is not where we look for truth. We should always look to the Bible, even opening it to read from, as we discuss its truthfulness.*



MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for the examples in the Old Testament of His faithfulness.
- Ask God to help you and your students to trust Him in all circumstances, and to recognize that He is faithful, no matter how bleak the circumstances may appear

