

“The Providence of God”
Introduction to Exodus Series of Sermons
Exodus 1
January 9, 2005
Dr. Jerry Nelson

As I mentioned last week, if we think about it very long at all, the events of the last two weeks in and around the Indian Ocean, raise many questions; hard questions.

Theodicy is a word that describes the effort of reconciling the existence of a great and good God with the presence of evil and tragedy.

When I see the pictures of children suffering, it makes me want to ask, “Where is God?” or “What is he doing?”

Such questions become even sharper and more difficult when it is our loved ones or us who are immediately affected.

It is then that we cry with the Psalmist, “How long O Lord, How long?”

- Maybe it is unremitting pain that causes such questions.
- Maybe it is the death of a child.
- Maybe it is a series of what we call “misfortunes” that leave us wondering if there is any hope.

Times of disappointment, discouragement, and dismay are common from early in life.

And the people of God are not immune to the temptations to discouragement and even despair.

We have solid evidence to suggest that Moses wrote the book of Exodus.

And he wrote it while the people of God, the Israelites – 2-3 million in number, were camping in the desert of the Sinai Peninsula.

They had escaped from the Egyptians and were heading to the Promised Land - Canaan.

But because of their unbelief they were condemned to 40 years of waiting in the desert with nothing but enemies around them

and powerful enemies living in the land they were supposed to eventually inhabit.

They were living in tents, with nowhere to go and with manna to eat morning and evening.

And as I said, their immediate future was simply to wait – to wait until everyone who was then over 20 years of age had died.

It is that audience that first heard Moses' stories as retold in the book of Exodus.

The question implied at the beginning of the book of Exodus is as old as Job and as current as these past two weeks – “What in the world is God doing?”

This morning, I want God's word to influence what we think of God. And secondly, I want us to see our lives from God's perspective.

And thirdly, I want God's word to influence what we think of our circumstances whether, at the moment, they seem good or bad.

Please stand for the reading of God's word:

Exodus 1

And “These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. ⁵ The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt.

^{EX 1:6} Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, ⁷ but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them.

^{EX 1:8} Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

EX 1:11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

EX 1:15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶ "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." 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. ¹⁸ Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"

EX 1:19 The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."

EX 1:20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

EX 1:22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

May God add his blessing to this reading of his holy and inspired word.

Prayer: "Spirit of God, give us minds to understand and hearts to trust what you teach us from your word today."

This story in the book of Exodus does not begin well.

In fact what we have read thus far, ends on a tragic note!

Think of it! The entire country is put on notice that Hebrew baby boys are fair game.

In fact not only is it "open season" on Jewish male infants but the people of the country are **ordered** to kill them.

Unfortunately 3500 years later and many times between similar orders would be given by equally evil despots.

It was November 9, 1938.

Joseph Goebbels, the propaganda minister for Adolph Hitler, saw another opportunity to demonize the Jewish people.

Two days earlier a Polish-Jewish student had shot a German diplomat in Paris.

With Hitler's blessing, Goebbels incited the Nazi Storm Troopers to take revenge by organizing "spontaneous" demonstrations against the Jewish people of Germany and Austria.

The intention was to build public resentment and hatred toward the Jews.

The immediate result is what we now know as "Kristallnacht" (night of crystal) because of all the broken glass that littered the streets of the Jewish areas of those countries.

The public was given license to do whatever it wanted, to the Jews in their cities.

In one night scores of Jews were killed, 177 synagogues were burned, 7500 Jewish businesses were destroyed, and 30,000 Jews were arrested by the Gestapo.

Worst of all, the event fed a growing hatred among German people for anything Jewish – eventually allowing for the complicity in or at least the indifference shown as 6,000,000 Jews were killed in the coming 6 years.

Goebbels and Hitler took a page right out of the Pharaoh's playbook.

By the time in history referred to in Exodus chapter 1, the Egyptian people are part of the attempted genocide of the Israelites.

Exodus 1:22 "Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every (Hebrew) boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

Apparently over time the Pharaoh's propaganda machine turned the Egyptian people against the Israelites.

Exodus 1:12 says, "So the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites."

The word "dread" can also be translated "loathed."

The word conveys a negative prejudice.

And in that climate of fear and hatred it was now the law that every Hebrew baby boy was to be drowned.

Most of us know that one baby boy, Moses, escaped that fate and led his people to freedom.

- But what of the babies that didn't escape?
- What of the families that were devastated by that genocidal law?
- For that matter, what of the Israelites who were sitting in the desert 60 years later waiting to die?

What were all of those families to think?

Where in the world is God?

I think it is that question, among others, that God, through Moses, is answering in this book of Exodus.

As I said earlier, I want God's word to influence what you think of God.

Secondly, I want you to see your life from God's perspective.

And thirdly, I want God's word to influence what you think of your circumstances whether, at the moment, they seem good or bad.

So how does Moses give his people and us a correct perspective on life and even on the hardships and tragedies of life?

How does he bring true hope into what tempts us to discouragement or despair?

I answer with one sentence: He implores us to look at God rather than ourselves.

Or stated differently, he urges us to see our circumstances in the greater context of what God is doing in all of history.

Moses will give us ample reason to trust God and then implicitly call us to that trust.

So let's see what God is doing in the world!

The book begins with a reminder of long-before history.

God's work in the world didn't begin with me and it won't end with me.

We are so shortsighted that we tend to judge God based on our experience of the last 30 minutes.

So Moses pulls his readers back in time over 500 years.

Exodus 1:1-5 "These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher. ⁵ The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all; Joseph was already in Egypt."

In the Hebrew language, the book actually begins with the conjunction "and," reminding us that what continues here had its beginning in the book of Genesis.

I hope you remember that Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, had twelve sons.

Joseph, who was son number eleven, had been sold into slavery by his jealous brothers to men going to Egypt.

The land of Canaan, where Jacob and his other sons lived entered a time of severe famine.

After struggling to make ends meet, they finally went to Egypt to get grain.

There they were reunited with Joseph who, in the providence of God, had risen from slavery to become Prime Minister of the land.

Finally because the famine continued in Canaan, Jacob, his sons and their families moved, lock, stock and barrel, to Egypt.

Because of Joseph's prominence, they were given some of the most fertile land in the country – the area known as Goshen along the Nile River.

There they lived in prosperity, but always with the thought of returning to Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Every Israelite would have been constantly reminded of the promise made at least 100 years earlier:

Genesis 15:4-16 "Then the word of the LORD came to (Abraham): "This man (Ishmael) will not be your heir, but a son (Isaac) coming from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

^{GE 15:6} Abram believed the LORD, and he (God) credited it to him as righteousness.

^{GE 15:7} He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

^{GE 15:8} But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" ... (God told Abram to prepare a sacrifice, which Abram did) ^{GE 15:12} As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions."

So right at the beginning of Exodus, Moses puts us in touch with 500 years of God's work in the world.

And for the first many years things were wonderful in Egypt and the family of 70 became a tribe, a people, of thousands.

Exodus 1:6-7 "And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷ But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them."

With the use of many synonyms, Moses is obviously emphasizing the rapid growth and great number of the people of Israel.

When Joseph was alive and for a while after, when they were living on the most fertile land, 400 years didn't sound so bad.

But when things changed, as God said they would, 400 years can discourage the most ardent believer.

And change they did. Probably within 150 years the change of rulers of verse 8 takes place.

Exodus 1:8-10 "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

A new king didn't mean simply a change from a Queen Elizabeth to a King Charles as will take place in England in the next few years.

This change of kings was likely a coup wherein non-Egyptians took power.

They had no reason to know about Joseph or to keep any agreements if they did know.

The new king looked at the numbers, the prosperity and the growth rate of the Israelites and thought that he had to stop them or they would pose a threat to national security. (Fretheim, 28)

And so over the next 250 years this king and those who follow him increase the pressure on the Israelites, attempting to limit their number.

Exodus 1:11-14 "So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, **the more they multiplied and spread**; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly."

Now here is where those since, who question God's actions in the face of tragedy and suffering, begin to identify.

Moses doesn't paint a pretty picture.

He heaps words up to describe an intolerable situation: oppressed, bitter, ruthlessly, hard labor.

A mural from that era has been discovered on which is painted a slave master towering over Asiatic slaves saying, "The rod is in my hand, do not be idle."

An ancient Egyptian text titled, "Satire on the Trades," describes brick makers as follows: "He is dirtier than...pigs from treading under his mud. His clothes are stiff with clay, his leather belt (is) going to ruin... ..His sides ache, since he must be outside in a treacherous wind... His arms are destroyed with technical work...What he eats is the bread of his fingers, and he washes himself only once a season. He is simply wretched through and through..." (From Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 23)

Why does Moses point out their misery?

What was going on in the midst of this?

Exodus 1:11-12 "So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² **But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread;**

The very thing the kings and Pharaoh's meant to **decrease** the population of Israelites, God used to **increase** them.

Seeing that his program wasn't working, the king tried something much more evil – he tried infanticide – killing the male infants.

Pharaoh convinces his people that the Hebrews are a threat, such a threat as to require the murder of their children.

The same thinking is pervasive today; the pernicious lie of abortion is that an unborn child is a threat to my life or that nationally, many unborn children are a threat to our economic stability.

Such thinking lacks the perspective that only trust in God can give.

Exodus 15-16 “The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶ ‘When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.’ The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.”

With as many Israelites as there were, Shiphrah and Puah may not have been the only two but may have represented midwife guilds.

In any case, these women had a greater reverential awe of God than they had fear of the king.

Even in the face of likely death, for disobedience, these women had a larger and longer perspective on life and eternity.

Not only did they refuse to obey but they also managed to get in their own not-so-subtle insult as they said that the Hebrew women were just a lot tougher than the Egyptian women and they have their babies before the midwives gets there.

It is interesting that it is women, all the way through these first two chapters of Exodus, that wind up saving the people of Israel – these two midwives, Moses’ mother, his quick-witted sister, and the Princess of Egypt.

But Moses wants us most of all to see that it is God who is behind the scenes.

Exodus 1:20-21 “So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Again, the very thing the kings and Pharaoh’s meant to decrease the population of Israelites, God used to increase them, even using the civilly disobedient midwives to do it.

That must have caused a laugh or two as it was retold through the years.

Then, of course, is when we reach the nadir, the lowest point, of the story: Exodus 1:22 “Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people:

‘Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.’”

It doesn't take much thought to imagine the cries of the Hebrew people at that time: Where is God? What is he doing?

But by the time Exodus was written, what they, and now we, know is that the very river that was supposed to kill the Israelites became the river that saved them.

The very river that was to keep the Israelites in bondage became the river that floated their deliverer, Moses, right into the Pharaoh's own house.

Do you see what Moses is saying?

He condenses 500 or more years of history into one short chapter to demonstrate what becomes so easily obscured by our shortsightedness.

- A much loved son, Joseph, is lost to slave-traders,
- a famine threatens the very lives of Jacob's entire family,
- a privileged place in Egypt turns to slavery,
- and the cruelest fate of all, the slaughter of their sons, hangs over the people.

But what's happening through it all?

God has been in charge all the time, working his plan for the salvation of the world.

The Bible is not a history book per se.

It is a selective history – a history of God's saving work.

The Bible's purpose is far greater than simply chronicling people, places and events.

The Bible is salvation history.

Whenever you read the Bible, bear that in mind.

The stories of the Bible are not like Aesop's Fables; they are not merely fodder for moralisms.

To help give you an understanding of the sweep of salvation history in the Bible, in your bulletin today is “A Short History of God's Work in the World.”

I encourage you to read it and think about how each book of the Bible fits into God's overall plan of salvation of the world.

But our natural tendency is to be quite unssatisfied with merely a discussion of the sweep of history.

We are glad God is in control of history but we tend to think mostly, if not only, of our own history.

- We're glad there is a Moses who escapes the drowning but we wonder about the babies who didn't.
- We love the stories of miraculous escape from last week's tsunami, but we wonder about the thousands who didn't. We put ourselves in the place of those who didn't make it and we ask, what about me?

I think what Moses demonstrates in these opening chapters of Exodus is that we must have a wider perspective on God, life, and our place in it than we typically have.

We are often self-obsessed and bound to our own short view of history – namely, our life span.

We lump all that happened before we were born into one time frame (the past) and we lump all that might happen after we die into one time frame (the future).

And our perspective is only as great as we can imagine how it will impact us personally now.

We want all history to culminate in us and we think that way.

Every generation thinks it is the last.

Whether it is religious people thinking surely Jesus will come again in their lifetime or it is non-religious people speculating about the end of the world.

(Seen in the end-of-the-world movies that are always popular.)

We think God exists for us.

We think all history is supposed to be working out for our desired goals.

We become self-obsessed and thus we think we are entitled to a certain kind of life.

We think it is about us and so we demand to understand why this or that happened.

- We all want to be Joseph who rose to prominence out of slavery.
- We want to be Moses who escaped drowning and got to live in the Pharaoh's wealth.
- We want to be Joshua who led the army of God into the Promised Land.

We don't want to be the slave who died in the quarries of Egypt, or the baby whose life was snuffed out in the river, or the countless unnamed men and women who died in the desert and never got to the Promised Land.

But when I read Exodus I come to understand that it is not about me, it is about God.

- We think God exists for us but we learn that we exist for God.
- It is not God's role in my plan but my role in God's plan.

When Moses puts 500 years of history in front of me and then I add to that, what I know of the 3500 years since, I realize I am but a small part in God's salvation history.

- Is my role 15 minutes of life before I'm drowned in the Nile?
- Is my role suffering for a lifetime in the quarries of Egypt?
- Is my role to be a John the Baptist, a Robert Murray McChayne, or a Jim Elliott whose light shines brightly but is snuffed out before 30 years of age?
- Is my role to live long and prosperously?

What I learn is that God isn't part of my story, I'm part of his.

An evangelical church in town is currently running billboard ads that state their purpose in this way: "Your Success is our Passion!"

No! A thousand times, no.

God's success is our passion!!

I want my eternity tied to God's success not to mine.

I suppose we could misunderstand this God-centered thinking and conclude that we are nothing, that we are mere pawns on a great chessboard controlled by God.

We could become fatalistic or even nihilistic in our thinking.

But what we see is that God is in control of every detail of life because of his love for us.

We tend to think of our lives (be they short or long) as the sum of it.

But God has our eternity in mind.

God sees far beyond the 15 minutes that someone might live, or the years of suffering someone else might experience.

God is controlling both the immediate circumstances **and** setting things up for the future.

Oh the matchless wisdom of a God who can work “all things together for good” for the welfare of his people forever.

- Is God in control of your life or are you on your own?
- Is he working all things together for good?
- Is the life that you enjoy today or the life that you endure today the product of the providence of God?
- Is God a “watch-maker” God who simply wound the world up and let it go or is he intimately involved in every circumstance of our lives?

Great questions and how does God answer them in these early verses of Exodus?

We are part of a much larger picture of God’s work in the world to bring real salvation to his people.

As difficult as our lives may be or as incidental as they may seem, they are planned by a sovereign, benevolent God

We are the objects of his love but we must see that love from the perspective of eternity, not just from the perspective of our present circumstances.

God can be trusted, even through our present circumstances, to bring about what is ultimately good, even if we suffer and die before then.

Hebrews 12:1-3 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Prayer

I have appended several items to the sermon notes that you can find on our website (or below).

One of them (the last) is another description of the Providence of God.

You might find it helpful.

A Short History of God's Work in the World

Have you ever wondered how the books, stories and teachings of the Bible fit together? There is one main storyline running throughout the pages of Scripture. Following is a very short summary of "his" story and its gracious impact on us.

Creation (? B.C.):

"In the beginning, God. Before anything else was, there has always been one Supreme Being, God. Existing as three persons who nonetheless constitute a perfect unity, this God was sufficient within himself. He lacked nothing for his satisfaction or joy. Because his very nature is love (an unselfish concern for another) and because he is three-persons-in-one (thus fulfilled within himself), he did not "need" to create anything. Yet, in his outgoing, altruistic nature, he chose to bring into existence finite entities. He created a physical universe, together with light and energy. He constituted it with certain natural laws, which produced a regularity of action. Beyond that, he furnished the physical universe, populating it with plants and animals. He furnished the place called heaven with spiritual beings, angels, who worshiped and served him. And he created human beings, capable of knowing and obeying him, to dwell on his earth. And when he completed this creation, he looked upon it and pronounced his perfect judgment, "It is good."

Sin:

Initially, God's plan for humanity proceeded smoothly. The first man and his companion, the woman, were happy to obey God and have fellowship with him. They accepted their responsibility of naming and governing the creatures. They were satisfied to be his children. Then, however, a disruption of this perfect relationship occurred. At some unspecified time, but apparently after the completion of the rest of the universe but before this human disobedience, a rebellion had taken place within God's angelic forces, led by one of their number who aspired to be equal with God. Those who had participated in this unsuccessful coup were cast out of

heaven, and from that time have lived, not to obey, but to oppose, the causes of God.

It was not that some small element of sin existed that infected and contaminated otherwise pure beings. Rather, when they used their freedom in a way contrary to its intended purposes, a relationship was broken and became twisted and perverse. Not as a new substance, but as a distorted relationship, sin became a genuine reality in the world. And one of the efforts of this supreme demon, Satan, was to pervert the rest of God's perfect creation, beginning at the very pinnacle, with humans. So it was that he planted the seeds of sin in the mind of the first woman, Eve, creating doubt about the correctness of God's statement and leading her to eat the fruit of the one forbidden tree, in violation of God's prohibition. Eve soon encouraged her husband to do the same, and he quickly followed.

When this happened, however, severe disruptions occurred throughout the entire creation. Nature, which had been the servant of the humans, now at times became their enemy. Evils such as disease and death, which had previously been only potential, now became realities. Humans became enemies of other humans, and treated them with cruelty and exploitation.

Noah (? B.C.)

The human beings' now perverted natural tendency was to focus on their own wants and desires, at the expense either of God or of other humans. At one point the wickedness became so repugnant to God that he resolved to send a flood, which destroyed all except a few righteous people, Noah and his family, as well as the animals he had brought into the ark (the great boat God had commanded Noah to build for his deliverance).

Abraham (c.2000 B.C.) /Moses (c.1500 B.C.)/Joshua

Out of (the subsequently) rapidly growing human race, God selected one person, Abraham, and made a unique agreement with him. Abraham and his descendants were to be God's special covenant people, those who would have a unique relationship with him. He gave them a particular land to be their home. He delivered them from bondage to the Egyptians (through Moses) and brought them back to that sacred land, giving them victory over the people who occupied it (through Joshua).

The Kings (David (c.1000 B.C.), Solomon, et al.)

Again, however, God's people turned from him, following false gods instead, and God allowed them to be taken into captivity again (to Babylon). Even then, he remained true to his promise, and delivered them from that captivity, to return to the Promised Land.

Babylon (c.600 B.C.), Persian (c.500 B.C.), Greek (Alexander the Great c.400 B.C.), and Roman (c.100 B.C.) Empires

The nature of the way God spiritually organized the world he created was that sin, as a violation of God's law and the relationship with him, brought liability to punishment. To die without having been forgiven and restored by God was to be subject to eternal death, which meant endless separation from the God with whom one had been created for fellowship. No human being could offer anything to God to negate this punishment. God, however, decided in eternity past that when this point came he would do for humans what they could not do for themselves.

Jesus (B.C./A.D.)

And so the triune God determined that one of him, God the Son, would, without ceasing to be divine, add humanity to his deity and be born into the human race. This he did, being born in Nazareth as Jesus, the son of a virgin, Mary. He lived a life of perfect holiness and obedience to the Father. Then, in an act of perfect self-sacrifice, he died an undeserved death, thereby taking on himself all the guilt of all (his people) who had ever lived or ever will live. He then physically rose from the grave conquering death and sin and after showing himself to his disciples and many others he ascended into heaven to the right hand of God the Father. As he promised he sent his Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to indwell, encourage and guide his church. And he has also promised that he will physically return one day to gather believers of all the ages to be with him for eternity on the new earth.

Any human who voluntarily acknowledges to God his or her own sin, turns from and accepts this sacrificial provision of Christ, is immediately forgiven, granted eternal life, restored to fellowship with the triune God, and welcomed into the church universal.

Dr. Millard Erickson's Truth or Consequences
Edits and additions by Dr. Jerry Nelson
Southern Gables Church

Probable Time-line:

c. 2000 BC Abraham

Genesis 15:13 "Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.

Abraham the father of Isaac the father of Jacob (Jacob means "deceiver" and was renamed "Israel" by God. Israel means "struggler and overcomer". So his descendants become known as Israelites rather than Jacobites.)

1875 BC Joseph and Jacob to Egypt under ethnic Egyptian rulers

(See Gleason Archer A Survey of Old Testament Introduction 229)

1730 BC Hyksos rulers (Semitic, not ethnic Egyptians) come to power

Exodus 1:8-10 "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

Many, many years are represented by verses 1:8-14 which describe the growing hostility toward the Israelites and time for the Israelites to grow to over 603,000 men plus women and children (Numbers 2:32).

1559 BC Hyksos expelled by 18th Egyptian Dynasty (Amenhotep I 1559-1539 and Thutmose I 1539-1514) – The ethnic Egyptian rulers continue the slavery of the Israelites.

c. 1500 BC Moses

1527 BC Moses is born under Thutmose I (1539-1514)

Thutmose II (1514- ?) A sister (Hatshepsut, maybe the princess who found and reared Moses). She ruled after Thutmose II and was co-regent, for a while before her death with her step-son Thutmose III. Thutmose III despised his step-mother and thus would likely have sought to kill Moses forcing Moses to flee Egypt. (see Ron Youngblood Exodus , 24)

430 years from 1875 to 1450 Exodus 12:40-41 "Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt.

Thutmose III (1501-1447) continues oppression of Israelites.

Exodus 2:11 When Moses kills an Egyptian it is c. 1487 and Moses is 40 when he flees from Egypt.

1447 Moses (now 80) returns to Egypt under Amenhotep II (1447-1421)

Exodus 2:23 "During that long period, the king of Egypt died..." (Thutmose III)

1445 BC Exodus from Egypt – Amenhotep II the Pharaoh of the Exodus

Thutmose IV (1421-1412 BC) succeeded Amenhotep II but he was not the oldest son since the oldest son died during plague on first-born males (Exodus 12:29). (See Archer, 245)

1405 BC Conquest of Jericho (after Israel's 40 years in the desert)

480 years from Exodus to Solomon's Temple is begun. 1 Kings 6:1 "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD.

966 BC Solomon's Temple

Kingdom divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.

722 B.C. Israel defeated by the Assyrians
 606-586 Judah defeated by the Babylonians
 536 Temple restored under Ezra and Nehemiah

400s B.C. Alexander the Great

Rise of the Roman Empire

0 B.C./ 0 A.D. Birth of Jesus the Christ

PROVIDENCE

From the New Bible Dictionary

The universal providence of God is the basic assumption of all Scripture. The meaning is "prearrangement." As used historically the theological term "providence" means nothing short of "the universal sovereign rule of God."

The definition of the answer to Question 11 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism expresses the view of all Bible-believing Christians: "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." Divine providence is the outworking of the divine decrees, which are "the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph 1:11).

The biblical doctrine of divine providence does not imply a mechanistic or fatalistic view of the processes of the world or of human life. This may best be summed up by a quote from The Westminster Confession. "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

"God's providence includes the permission of all . . . sins of angels and men, and that not a bare permission, but such permission as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous,

neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin" (Westminster Confession, ch. V., paragraphs II and IV).

"Second causes" are the ordinary forces and events of nature that God usually employs to accomplish his purposes. That God's providence includes his decree to permit sin should not seem strange or paradoxical (Gen 50:20).

It is customary to distinguish *special* providence from *general* providence. The former term refers to God's particular care over the life and activity of the believer (Ps 37:23; Rom 8:28; Phil 1:28). The entire Book of Job is devoted to the temporal sufferings of a godly man under divine providence. Hebrews 11:40 tells us that providence, for men of faith, includes something far better than experiences of this life. General providence includes the government of the entire universe, but especially of the affairs of men (Deut 10:14; 32:8; cf. Neh 9:6; Dan 4:35).

Although God's grace is always offered to all people (Acts 10:34-35), yet the *main stream* of historical revelation and blessing for the world, through the instrumentality of Israel and the church, is a principal theme of all Scripture (7:1-60; 13:16-43; Rom 3:1-2; 9:3-6; 11:1; 1 Tim 3:15; cf. Heb 11:38 a). To this end God sometimes moves in unrecognized events and processes (Isa 40:1-5; 44:28-45:4).

Not only is the general course of nature sustained by God's providence, but the moral order and its logical consequences are as well (Gal 6:7-8). Divine providence sustaining the moral order is the principal theme of the Book of Proverbs.

The distinction between God's immanent or natural action and his transcendent or supernatural action is of supreme importance in the understanding of the doctrine of providence. See MIRACLES. The case of Christianity depends entirely on the miracles of the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, as the article on miracles shows, godly faith has always existed in a world in which there are long periods of time, even in Bible history, in which God does not choose to give "signs" or display miracles as evidences. It is

imperative that we learn to see the glory of God in the regular works of providence as well as in the miraculous.