

Exodus 1:1-21

Introduction

Big idea: Nothing will interfere with or prevent God from fulfilling His purpose and promises

A. God continued to multiply the descendants of Israel in Egypt after the death of Joseph and his brothers (READ Exodus 1:1-7)

1. This passage repeats what we learned in Genesis 46—when Jacob first arrived in Egypt, there were a total of seventy family members who arrived with him, plus Joseph and his family who already lived in Egypt
2. V. 7 tells us that since the death of Joseph and his brothers, their descendants **“were fruitful and increased and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them”** (1:7):
 - a. We already discussed this in our introduction, but the two prevailing viewpoints are that Israel’s population at the time of the Exodus was either ~30,000 or ~2-2.4 million
 - b. I gave you my opinion in the introduction and suggested that the 2-2.4 million figure is more likely, in part because the language in this verse couldn’t be any more emphatic:
 - 1) They were **“fruitful”**: Hebrew idiom essentially declaring that they were good at reproducing
 - 2) They **“increased greatly”**: Hebrew word **“to swarm”**
 - 3) They **“multiplied”**: Hebrew **“to become many or great”**
 - 4) They **“became exceedingly mighty”**: Hebrew **“to become mighty or numerous”** followed by the word for **“muchness, abundance, exceeding”**...but not just once but twice!
 - 5) The **“land was filled with them”**
 - 6) Last four verbs are in the imperfect tense indicating ongoing rather than completed action: they **“were swarming, multiplying, becoming exceedingly mighty, and the land was being filled with them”**
 - c. On a related note, notice how the words that Moses used here parallel what we find in the Creation account:
 - 1) In Genesis 1:28 God told mankind to **“be FRUITFUL and MULTIPLY, and FILL the earth...”**
 - 2) We see some of those same words here: Israel was FRUITFUL, MULTIPLYING and FILLING Egypt
 - 3) This shows God’s divine favor and blessing on them
3. The most important thing to understand in these seven verses is that this was a direct fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and Jacob:

- 1) READ Genesis 15:12-16
 - 2) READ Genesis 46:2-4
4. Takeaway: time will not prevent God’s purpose or promises from being fulfilled
- a. I am reminded of what Peter wrote regarding those who question or mock what the Bible says about the end times simply because it hasn’t happened yet (READ 2 Peter 3:1-13)
 - b. God is not bound by time which means that His timetable is not our timetable
 - c. Some of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were fulfilled in their lifetimes, others were fulfilled hundreds and thousands of years later, and still others are yet future
 - d. The Church has been waiting for Jesus to come back for some 2000 years, but that is no reason to lose hope or think that He will not fulfill His promise
 - e. Instead, as we just read in 2 Peter 3:12, we are to look forward to and hasten (e.g. be eager for) the coming of the day of God
 - f. Time will not prevent God’s purpose or promises from being fulfilled

B. God continued to multiply the descendants of Israel in Egypt even under severe oppression (READ 1:8-14)

1. Once again, we see that what God promised Abraham came true, and just as He had described it: in Genesis 15:13 He said that Abraham’s descendants would “**be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years**”
2. We see two principles at work in these six verses:
 - a. The first is that as Israel multiplied, so did the Egyptians fear and opposition to them:
 - 1) The Pharaoh was concerned because Israel was beginning to outnumber the Egyptians (READ 1:9)
 - 2) He was concerned that if Egypt was attacked, Israel might join with their enemies and not only fight against them but leave (READ 1:10)—the Pharaoh says, “**and go up from the land**” which can refer to escaping/leaving or rising up from the land and engulfing, overwhelming, or even conquering Egypt
 - 3) So, he enslaved Israel, put task masters over them, and afflicted them with hard labor (READ 1:11)
 - b. However, the second principle we see is that the more Israel was afflicted, the more they grew:
 - 1) The more the taskmasters afflicted Israel, the more they multiplied (READ 1:12a)
 - 2) And, the more Israel multiplied, the more brutally the Egyptians treated them (READ 1:12a-14):
 - a) Most English translations say that the Egyptians “**were in dread [fear] of the sons of Israel**”, but the word can also refer to loathing or detesting

something which might be more appropriate here (as the NET and LXX translate it)—it’s used this way in Numbers 21:5 when the Israelites complained about the food God provided saying, “**we loath this miserable food**”

- b) So, the Egyptians intensified their brutality and made the Israelites’ lives “**bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they ruinously imposed on them**” (14)

- 3. Takeaway: persecution will not prevent God’s purpose and promises from being fulfilled:
 - a. The Egyptian’s persecution and bitter and brutal treatment of the Israelites didn’t stop God from fulfilling His promise to multiply them
 - b. Neither did it stop the early Church from multiplying and accomplishing God’s purpose and promises:
 - 1) When Peter and John were arrested, threatened, and warned to stop preaching the Gospel they replied in Acts 4:19 by saying, “**Whether it is right in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**”
 - 2) When the Apostles were arrested in Acts 5, an angel led them out of prison and the very next morning they went into the temple and started teaching about Jesus (Acts 5:20-21)
 - 3) When they were re-arrested and warned again, Acts 5:29 says they responded, “**We must obey God rather than men**”; later in vs. 41-42 it says they rejoiced after they were flogged that “**they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for the Name**” of Jesus and continued to preach daily in the temple and from house to house
 - c. Even today, the Gospel continues to spread around the world, often spreading the fastest in places where persecution is the most severe
 - d. Persecution cannot stop God from fulfilling His purpose and promises

C. God continued to multiply the descendants of Israel in Egypt even in the face of genocide (1:15-21)

- 1. Since oppressing and enslaving the Israelites didn’t slow down their multiplication, the Pharaoh resorted to genocide:
 - a. Initially, he ordered the Hebrew midwives to murder every newborn son, but they secretly refused to comply:
 - 1) Two of the midwives are named in the text, Shiphrah and Puah: it’s unlikely there were only two considering the population, so they were likely the head midwives (they refer to “**the midwife**” in the third person in v. 19)
 - 2) V. 17 tells us why they refused to do what the Pharaoh commanded: “**But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to**

them, but let the boys live.”—their fear of God is mentioned a second time in v. 21

- 3) When the Pharaoh confronted them, the excuse they gave was that the Hebrew women weren't like Egyptian women and gave birth before the midwives got there (RE-READ 1:18-19):
 - a) Some question whether the midwives were lying here, and that's possible—but it wouldn't be any different than when Rahab lied to protect the men who spied on Jericho during the conquest
 - b) However, if we simply take their words at face value, the Hebrew women were not like the Egyptian women but were “**vigorous**” and gave birth before they got there:
 - It's not real clear what this means but it's from the word live
 - It could mean that there was a physiological difference with the Hebrew women that shortened their labor
 - However, others have proposed that the difference was sociological meaning that Hebrew women were more active or involved with their own childbirth which required less work by the midwives
 - c) We also can't ignore that there may have been a supernatural element involved
- 4) Because the midwives feared God and refused to obey Pharaoh, God was good to them, gave them families of their own, and continued to multiply Israel (RE-READ 1:20-21)
 - b. When this plan failed, he commanded his officials to murder every newborn male by tossing them into the Nile but let the females live (22)
2. Takeaway: the threat of death, and even death itself, will not prevent God's purpose and promises from being fulfilled:
 - a. The religious leaders and Jews of Jesus' day thought they could stop God's plan by crucifying Jesus, but it only emboldened the Apostles and His disciples
 - b. They thought they could stop God's plan by killing Stephen, but after they stoned him to death and Saul began to severely persecute the Church, Acts 8:4 says that those who were “**scattered went about, proclaiming the good news of the word**”
 - c. King Herod thought he could stop God's plan by killing James and arresting Peter but God had other plans, rescued Peter from prison, killed Herod, and afterward Acts 12:24 says, “**But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.**”
 - d. Each of the Apostles, with the exception of maybe John, were martyred for their faith, but the Gospel continued to spread
 - e. In the second century, Christians were imprisoned, beaten, burned, whipped, killed with the sword, sawed in half, and fed to the lions which led Church Father

Tertullian to write that the more Christians were persecuted and “mowed down”, the more they multiplied because “**the blood of Christians is seed**”

- f. The same is true today—according to Open Doors, almost 5000 Christians are murdered for their faith every year—that’s 13 per day—but even this will not keep God from fulfilling His purpose or promises

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| Conclusion |
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1. Time will not prevent God’s from fulfilling His purpose and promises
2. Persecution will not prevent God from fulfilling His purpose and promises
3. Neither the threat of death or death itself will prevent God from fulfilling His purpose or promises