

Finding Your Story in HIStory
When God Gets Ready to Move
Acts 7:17-36

January 29, 2012

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Text Introduction: My prayer for us in 2012 is that we find our story in God's story, in HIStory. So far we have learned from creation that God has a plan for our lives. That revealed plan shows us that God desires a relationship with us and that He decrees a purpose for our lives. Then we saw how sin entered the world. God wants relationship but we choose rebellion.

Last week, we began to learn what God is doing to restore us to Himself. He chose a people through whom to work. The rest of the book of Genesis advances the story of that people. First, Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob and his 12 sons. In fact, throughout the Bible, God is continued to be referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

There's a lot to the story that we obviously are not detailing, but during this period a nation is growing. What was promised to Abraham that his descendants would be as large as the stars in the sky is indeed being brought to pass. The one caveat to the story as we pick up today is that this nation has been growing in Egypt, not in the land where God had Abraham originally settle. The reason? Well, the short story is that one of the 12 sons of Jacob had been sold into slavery and wound up in Egypt. God prospered him there and when a famine came, the other sons of Jacob went to Egypt to get food. Eventually, they are revealed as Joseph's brothers and the whole family went to live in Egypt. Eventually, the 12 sons all die, but they left a mighty family.

Text: ¹⁷ "As the time was drawing near to fulfill the promise that God had made to Abraham, the people flourished and multiplied in Egypt ¹⁸ until a different king who did not know Joseph ruled over Egypt. ¹⁹ He dealt deceitfully with our race and oppressed our ancestors by making them leave their infants outside, so they wouldn't survive. ²⁰ At this time Moses was born, and he was beautiful in God's sight. He was cared for in his father's home three months, ²¹ and when he was left outside, Pharaoh's daughter adopted and raised him as her own son. ²² So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his speech and actions.

²³ "As he was approaching the age of 40, he decided to visit his brothers, the Israelites. ²⁴ When he saw one of them being mistreated, he came to his rescue and avenged the oppressed man by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵ He assumed his brothers would understand that God would give them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. ²⁶ The next day he showed up while they were fighting and tried to reconcile them peacefully, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating each other?'

²⁷ "But the one who was mistreating his neighbor pushed him away, saying:

Who appointed you a ruler and a judge over us? ²⁸ Do you want to kill me, the same way you killed the Egyptian yesterday?

²⁹ "At this disclosure, Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he fathered two sons. ³⁰ After 40 years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the

flame of a burning bush. ³¹ When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he was approaching to look at it, the voice of the Lord came: ³² I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. So Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look.

³³ “Then the Lord said to him:

Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴ I have observed the oppression of My people in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to rescue them. And now, come, I will send you to Egypt.

³⁵ “This Moses, whom they rejected when they said, Who appointed you a ruler and a judge?—this one God sent as a ruler and a redeemer by means of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶ This man led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness 40 years.

Introduction: D.L. Moody was a rather well known evangelist of the 19th century. Most in our generation would say that D.L. Moody was to the 19th century what Billy Graham was to the 20th century. At the beginning of his ministry, Moody travelled to England. At that time the greatest evangelists came from England, and the greatest evangelistic harvests happened in England. Moody wanted to talk with these evangelists—learn from these evangelists. One such man was someone named Henry Varley. In their visit, Varley said to Moody:

“The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him.” (Henry Varley as spoken to D.L. Moody)

In his generation, I’m sure that Varley was right. But in the whole of history, there are some others that probably come to mind. The Apostle Paul for example is one who always comes to mind. I think the man before us in our text today, Moses, also fits rather well this description.

It’s not easy to quickly tell the story of Moses. I’m grateful for the summary that the historian, Dr. Luke, gives us in the Book of Acts. Moses’ life has three broad eras. First, he is raised in royalty. This was 40 years. Then, as we read, he spent the next 40 years in isolation. The last of his years were spent in being a great leader of a great people. In his life, he saw perhaps like no other person in history, the greatest supernatural miracles. Every time that I think about Moses, I try to remind myself that the God who spoke to Moses, still speaks; the God who led Moses, still leads; and the God who delivered Moses and the Israelites, still delivers. The God who moved a whole nation out of bondage, still moves.

The Promise of God’s Omniscience

Two things happen to the nation of Israel in the time leading up to the birth of Moses and ministry of Moses. First of all, the nation flourishes. Second, of all, the nation eventually becomes frustrated. None of this is a surprise to God. Remember what God said as is recorded in Acts 7:6-7. Moses’ story teaches us that God is omniscient—all knowing—and what He has planned will come to pass. So, it did not matter that a new Pharaoh has a plan to shrink the people of Israel. God had a plan for a Godly family to have a baby that would be protected. It did not matter that there would be a wicked Pharaoh who would refuse to allow the people to leave Egypt and return to a land of promise. God had 10 plagues in store for Egypt so that Pharaoh had to let them go. It did not matter that this wicked Pharaoh

would have a huge army that would keep Israel from the Exodus even though he first said they could go. God parted the Sea for Israel to pass and then swallowed up the Egyptian army in that same sea.

Your situation today may look more like disaster than deliverance, but remember the promise of an omniscient God.

The Power of One

The second lesson that I want us to drink in today is “The power of one.” Don’t ever underestimate the power of one person to make a great difference.

- God often sees in us more than we see in ourselves. What’s one of the excuses that you remember that Moses offered to God when God called him to be the deliverer? He was not eloquent of speech. He mentions this several times actually. (4:10, 6:12 and 6:30) But look at what Stephen said about him as recorded in Acts 7:22.
- God can only use us when we are God-reliant, not self-reliant. (Acts 7:23ff.)

You might be the only person in your family (work or school) that trusts God. You might be thinking, “What can one person do?” Look at Moses. God used one to set in motion a chain of events that would change the course of human history.

The Prerequisite of Obedience

The whole story of the Exodus and the beginning of Israel as an independent nation is a story of obedience. Note these:

1. Following the Call of God—Moses (1-4)
Like Abraham, Moses has to follow God’s call, not fully understanding how it might all turn out.
2. Following God out of Egypt (11-12)

Two instructions are pointed out as they leave Egypt:

- (1) Bring silver and gold—11:2 (Not fully understood until the instructions for the tabernacle are given)
 - (2) Blood on doorposts—very specific
3. Following God across the Red Sea (14:1-18)
 4. Following God’s Instructions in Eating Manna and Drinking Water (16-17:7)
 5. Following God’s Battle Plans against the Amalekites (17:8-16)
 6. Following God’s Instructions in Preparation for Moses to Meet the Lord (19)
 7. The Ten Commandments (20)
 8. Civil and Ceremonial Laws (21-24)
 9. Design of the Tabernacle (25-27)

1. Celebrate what God has done

2 *Examples:*

- Yeast—Festival of Unleavened Bread 13:8—reminder that they came out of Egypt
- 13:11 First born—again to remind them that the Lord had spared their first born. We have similar things—baptism and Lord’s Supper come to mind. The point is that God was building in them to be a people of worship.

2. Create an atmosphere of dependence on God

Example: The manna. They would have many more times to depend on the Lord. For example, the battle of Jericho. Our obedience today prepares us for trusting God in the future.

3. Create a more orderly society

Some say rules are no fun and are too binding. But, if we remove the rules from a game, we can’t play the game. So it is with life. God gave us perfect rules. He created us. He knows what rules should be.

The *Daily Walk Bible* devotional for January 25 says, “Imagine what a football game would be like without rules: no boundaries, no clock, no referees, no time limit. Probably no fun! Rules are essential for the enjoyment of life.

4. Communicate the holiness of God

5. Causes us to see our own need for Christ.

The Ultimate Word of Application in Exodus: Partial obedience is not obedience!

After his meeting with Henry Varley, D.L. Moody took those words to heart. “The world has yet to see what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him.” These words became something of a motto for Moody’s life. In fact, Moody always attached these words: “I will try my utmost to be that man.”