

The Gospel of Exodus

MISERY, DELIVERANCE, GRATITUDE

Michael P. V. Barrett



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The Gospel of Exodus

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To

Robert Daniel Bell,

my teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend

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Preface

The Bible is God's gracious gift to fallen humanity. Without the truths recorded in the Bible, humankind is hopelessly and helplessly doomed. In the pages of this book, God speaks, revealing who He is, who we are, what He has done to reconcile us to Himself, and how eternally dangerous it is not to listen to and heed what He has said. Without faith it is impossible to please Him, and without His word there is nothing to believe, for faith comes by hearing the word of God. His giving His word is grace.

Significantly, His word of grace concerns His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The overriding purpose of the Bible is to guide sinners to a saving relationship with God. God has charted the way, and the only way is through His Son, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In both the Old and the New Testaments, the central message is Christ. To miss Christ is to miss the point. The resurrected Christ made that claim to His companions on the road to Emmaus when He began with Moses and expounded what all the Scriptures had to say concerning Himself (Luke 24:27).

It has been one of the joys in the ministry that God has given to me—whether in teaching, preaching, or writing—to guide others to find Christ in the Old Testament. The Old Testament shares the universally and timelessly relevant message with the New. There has ultimately been only one message and one way of salvation: Christ is the first and the final Word. Whether in the Old Testament or the New and from the garden of Eden until now, Christianity has ever been the only true religion.

That is most evidently the case with the book of Exodus. Although every book of the Bible concerns the gospel, Exodus, with its history, laws, and rituals, is a theological high-water mark in Old Testament revelation. As far as the doctrine of salvation is concerned, Exodus does not miss a point. In this study, I want to extract those salvific themes to highlight and underscore the timeless gospel truths. I will focus on the big picture and not the minute details. I do not intend to write a commentary that addresses or attempts to solve all the interpretation problems, even though Exodus has its share. This will be a broad, panoramic view of the book's theology that I trust will exalt the Lord and increase understanding and enjoyment of the gospel.

I cannot engage in this kind of book analysis without thinking of Dr. Robert D. Bell, to whom I have dedicated this project. Under God, I suppose I owe more to Robert Bell than any other man. His influence on me has been profound, and I often wonder if I've ever had an original thought in my life because I learned so much from him. Among other things, he introduced to me this methodology of doing a book theology. After I finished my analysis of Exodus, I suppose I should not have been surprised that when I looked at his analysis of the book, he had isolated many of the same themes. Maybe I was just thinking his thoughts after him. Who knows? But his influence on me has been profound. You can read his theological analysis of all the books of the Old Testament in his work *The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books* (Greenville, S.C.: BJU Press, 2010). So I want to thank Dr. Bell. As a teacher, he was demanding and at times a bit eccentric, but God used him to instill in me a love for the Old Testament. He was my first Hebrew teacher. That was the class that changed the whole course of my ministry. As a young graduate student, I found him intimidating. I will never forget the day when I passed him in the hall and he said, "Hi, Mike." I thought I had arrived. He became my mentor, and I became—as he would say—*ben lašoni* (the son of my tongue), I guess because I had a knack for language. We became colleagues and friends, but he remains my teacher.

I also want to thank the board of trustees of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary for granting me a sabbatical to work on this project. Everything else that I've ever written has been squeezed in between other duties. I confess that I have missed the classroom—committee work not so much—but to be able to focus my attention on a single project full time has been a unique blessing. I could get used to it pretty quickly, but....

I express my gratitude to Reformation Heritage Books for their willingness to publish the book and to Annette Gysen's editing expertise. Thanks also to Sandra, my wife, who was the first to read every chapter. She invariably discovered spelling and punctuation errors but never failed to assure me that it was good. Whether that is true or not is beside the point; the point is that she is a great encourager. According to her, I never preached a bad sermon! I am grateful for her.

Above all, I am grateful to the Lord for His saving grace and for His calling me to the sacred ministry. The privilege of working daily in the Scriptures and being able to share what God has shown me with others, either in teaching, preaching, or writing, is an indescribable blessing. It has often been my prayer throughout my ministry that the Lord would use me. It is my prayer now that He would use this book to His glory and for the spiritual benefit of others.

—Michael P. V. Barrett

Introduction

Faith is not make-believe. It is impossible to believe something into existence; it is impossible to deny something out of existence. Faith is only as good as its object; biblical theology is based in fact. For this reason, the New Testament begins with four gospel accounts of the historical Jesus. If the facts of Jesus are not true, then all the theology about Jesus is just make-believe. For the same reason, the Old Testament begins with five historical accounts that mark the beginning and trace the initial progression of God's redemptive program, which led to the fullness of time when Jesus entered into it. If the facts of that redemptive history are not true, then the message being conveyed in that history is untrustworthy.

Given the vital connection between faith and fact, it is not surprising that the fiercest attacks skeptical critics level against the Bible are aimed at the four Gospels and the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. Undermining the history reduces the issues of faith to nothing more than religious lore and theories. Without the foundation of history, the superstructure of faith crumbles. Some "theologians" are satisfied with and argue for a dichotomy between real history and faith history. Belief is one thing; facts are another. After all—so goes the logic—the Bible is concerned with matters of faith. Since it is not a history book, inaccuracies regarding historical facts are not really significant and should not affect faith. The apostle Paul certainly contradicted this untenable division in his arguments for the resurrection: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17 KJV). In other words, belief in the resurrection is worthless if there were no resurrection in fact. By

logical extension, this applies to every other doctrine of Scripture. If the Bible is not true regarding any point of history, it is unreliable on any point of theology.

All this has direct bearing on the book of Exodus. Exodus reveals truths about the gospel that are essential to salvation, and it does so in large part through the medium of redemptive history. Exodus is the second of five books of the Bible that constitute the division of the Old Testament called the Torah (literally, “instruction”), otherwise referred to as the Pentateuch, the Law of Moses, or just plain Moses. Although it is second in the canonical order, it most likely, at least in its inception, is the first of divinely revealed and inspired Scripture.¹ Israel was hardly three months out of Egypt when God commanded Moses to start writing (Ex. 17:14), and throughout the book are references to the fact that Moses wrote what God instructed him to write (24:4; 34:27). The very existence of the book of Exodus marks a momentous juncture in the course of God’s revealing Himself and His word to humanity, this special revelation apart from which there is no hope of salvation or deliverance from sin’s curse. God began the progress of special revelation to communicate His gracious word in the garden of Eden as soon as humankind needed that word of grace. That word came through various means, such as dreams, visions, Christophanies, and audible voice, all—for the most part—directed to and received by individuals. It was not until Moses, however, that for the first time in the history of the world the Holy Spirit moved a holy man to inscribe that word (2 Peter 1:21).² This process resulted in an inspired product

1. Sometimes the canonical order or time of composition does not equate to the historical setting. The history in Genesis obviously predates the events of Exodus. Genesis gives no indication as to the time of composition but most likely was written sometime during the wilderness wanderings.

2. I am fully aware of the widespread denial of Mosaic authorship. It is not my purpose here to address those critical claims; there are many conservative defenses of Mosaic authorship available. See, for instance, Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 91–102. Throughout this volume, I regard Moses as the author of Exodus specifically and of the Pentateuch as a whole.

that has been preserved for the profit of both the contemporaries of the process and the recipients of the product for the generations that followed, including us (2 Tim. 3:16–17). That the first breathed-out word the Lord revealed was history is significant indeed. If Exodus is the first of the written word of God, it certainly warrants careful attention and consideration.

The truths of the Bible are universally and timelessly relevant, but they were first given to a specific people at a specific time to meet specific needs. The ultimate objective of our study of the Bible is to understand those universal and timeless truths and to apply them to our specific times and needs. Exodus is a picture of salvation; it is a picture prophecy of spiritual truths that find ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Christ. The historical record and the gospel message are inseparably linked; looking at the picture discloses the message. Even though the events are ancient history, the message remains the same now as it was then.

Yet there is something about reading history that can be tedious, particularly when wading through the bog of details. Certainly there are details in Exodus that easily grasp and hold the attention, such as the crossing of the Red Sea or the tragic episode of the golden calf. But other details seem to be pointless, at least in terms of spiritual truths. Reading the blueprints for constructing the tabernacle is hard enough, only to have to read the same blueprints again after its erection. Admittedly, this is the kind of issue that puts off many Christians from reading the Old Testament at all. My concern is that we read the Old Testament, including Exodus, with a view to the spiritual benefit that God has intended. What He says, He says on purpose according to His infinite wisdom. He knows what we need to know.

I do not intend in this book to write a verse-by-verse or even a chapter-by-chapter commentary on Exodus. Such commentaries are necessary, helpful, and plentiful. Rather, I want to sum up the theological message of the book by identifying key salvific themes. Understanding the big picture helps to understand the details. The Heidelberg Catechism gives the classic summation of the Christian life and experience in terms of misery, deliverance, and gratitude.

Significantly, the book of Exodus exemplifies that rubric, and accordingly, I will use those categories to organize my theological analysis. It is almost as though the framers of the catechism used the logic of Exodus to organize the credal confession. My objective is to look at the picture of salvation that Exodus portrays and then to highlight the theological point—a picture/point analysis. I will do this under two broad parts: “The Facts of the Matter” and “The Matter of the Facts.”

Part 1, “The Facts of the Matter,” addresses specifically the link between theology and history. Chapter 1 explains how Exodus is a paradigm, or pattern, of salvation that includes each of the components of misery, deliverance, and gratitude. This chapter also explains how something that happened to a nation physically applies to what happens to individuals spiritually. Chapter 2 is an overview of the historical setting in which Exodus occurs. An important part of Bible study is to learn what we can about the times and particular circumstances in which a book is set. This chapter will address the date of the exodus and identify the pharaoh who was forced by God to let the people go.

Part 2, “The Matter of the Facts,” develops the theological themes in three sections according to the misery, deliverance, gratitude outline. Chapter 3 will consider the misery motif by looking at Israel’s slavery in Egypt as a picture of sin’s bondage, which is inescapable apart from divine intervention.

The section on deliverance is the most extensive. This should not be surprising since the very name of the book, at least according to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, suggests this theme: Exodus, “the way out.” Chapter 4 identifies the agents of deliverance, both divine and human. Chapter 5 answers the question as to why God delivered Israel. Three chapters (6–8) address the means of deliverance in terms of power, blood, and faith. Chapter 9 identifies whom God delivered, and chapter 10 considers where Israel was headed after leaving Egypt.

Gratitude, or thankfulness, is the final section. Chapter 11 introduces the principle of gratitude as the necessary response to

deliverance. Chapters 12 and 13 consider the law of God, both the moral law as delineated in the Decalogue and the civil laws as recorded in the Book of the Covenant. Obeying the law is evidence of thankfulness for deliverance, not a means of deliverance. Thus it is with Exodus. There would have been no hope had Moses received the tablets at the burning bush as a prerequisite for deliverance. But on the contrary, Israel received the law at Sinai after they had already been delivered. Finally, chapter 14 focuses on the tabernacle, the place of worship and communion with God. Praise and thanksgiving are integral components of worship.

To summarize, in this study I am concerned with the big picture of Exodus, not the minute details. To show how the major parts fit together to advance the revelation of Christ and the gospel is my primary objective rather than to exegete or interpret all the specific parts. Certainly some detailed exegesis is necessary to get the big picture, and I will engage in those exegetical details as required. There will be times when I refer to a Hebrew word. For readers who know Hebrew, this will be a help. For those who don't, just ignore the strange-looking forms because the flow of thought does not depend on being able to recognize a Hebrew word. Also, you will note that there are a good number of footnotes, some quite lengthy. Don't let them put you off. You should be able to follow the thought of the text without ever reading the footnotes at all. But I have included them for several reasons. Some are digressions that relate to the narrative but would disrupt the flow of the thought if included in the text. Some give credit to other scholars for suggesting particular thoughts that I've developed. Some are references or quotations from other scholars whose reputations excel mine who concur with me or support something I wrote. It is always nice when others agree with you. Some of the notes suggest other resources to consider for further reading for those who might be interested. I even include some notes from those who may disagree with what I've said. But confessedly, even with the technical discussions, there may be some problems of interpretation that remain unresolved. That's where the commentaries come in. Almost all the biblical texts cited are my

own translations. When not my own, they will be from the King James Version. As you get started, it is my prayer that throughout this study the Lord Jesus Christ will be evidently set forth and the Holy Spirit will lead into truth, showing Christ and glorifying Him.

Exodus: Just the Facts

Authorship: Moses

Date: 1446 BC

Theme: Misery, deliverance, gratitude

Purpose: To reveal God's power and faithfulness in keeping His covenant promise to deliver His people from the bondage of sin to the service of grace.

Movements:

1. In Egypt (chapters 1–12)
2. To Sinai (chapters 13–19)
3. At Sinai (chapters 20–21)

PART 1

The Facts of the Matter

A Paradigm of Salvation

Misery, deliverance, gratitude—these three words sum up the experience and testimony of every Christian. Significantly, these words mark the threefold division of the Heidelberg Catechism, which so personally and experientially defines and applies the great truths of the gospel as understood from a biblical perspective and in the Reformed tradition.¹ In many ways, these three words constitute the rubric that overlays all of Scripture.

When Adam fell, all humankind sinned in him and fell with him in that first transgression. That fall brought the curse and plunged humanity into an estate of sin, misery, and death. Every person is burdened with the guilt of that original sin, has lost any and every hint of righteousness, is absolutely corrupt in the whole nature, and lives in a way that exposes the stink of spiritual death. Consequently, every descendent of Adam has lost communion with God, experiences God's displeasure, is under the curse of divine wrath, is a slave to Satan, and is justly liable to all the miseries of this life, to death and the prospects of the pains of hell forever (see Westminster Larger Catechism 27). If God had left humanity alone, there would be no hope and nothing but utter helplessness. But God graciously did not leave humanity alone. In the richness of His mercy

1. Question 2 asks, "How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?" The answer gives the summation of Christian living: "Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance."

according to His sovereign good pleasure, He made a way out of that estate of sin and misery to a state of eternal salvation. There were help and hope after all.

At the very moment when humankind needed a word of hope and deliverance, God revealed His gracious purpose and plan to reverse the curse. Amazingly, the announcement of deliverance was part of the pronouncement of the curse. Genesis 3:15 records God's curse on the serpent-tempter, which includes a projection of the Curse-Reverser (the Seed of the woman), who would ultimately and fatally defeat the tempter. The hostility between the two seeds was fixed and the outcome secured. At every step, the serpent and his seed would attempt to thwart and frustrate the Seed of the woman. But at every step, the Seed of the woman would prevail. All of history from that moment in the garden relentlessly progressed to the fullness of time when the Seed of the woman would come to crush the serpent's head. All history, therefore, is redemptive in its purpose and progression. It is not a stretch to mark Genesis 3:15 as the key that opens the rest of the Bible as it sets the stage for the progression of God's redemptive program. God charted the way out of misery through the mighty deliverance accomplished by His Son.

To put it in Pauline terms, this deliverance from sin's misery was "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph. 1:6 KJV). Gratitude, praise, and obedience are the necessary, expected, and logical responses to grace. This is the progression of Paul's logic in Romans as he moves from his description of sin in chapters 1-3, to his exposition of salvation in chapters 4-11, to his demand of a life of consecration in chapters 12-16. Likewise, it parallels David's testimony in Psalm 40 as he was delivered from the muck of misery to be set on a rock and to have a new song placed in his mouth, even praise to God.

My point in all of this is that the book of Exodus is a paradigm of salvation and accordingly conforms to the salvific rubric of misery, deliverance, and gratitude. There is hardly a component of gospel truth that does not find expression in Exodus, a Greek word meaning "the way out." The slavery in Egypt is a vivid picture of

the misery of sin's bondage. The escape, or way out, from Egypt is a vivid picture of deliverance. Israel's response to God's law and commitment to the service of the tabernacle are evidence of gratitude. Therefore, the Heidelberg Catechism's formula for the Christian life provides a fitting structure for presenting the salvific data of Exodus. Exodus is rich with gospel lessons.

But Israel's physical escape from Egypt raises a legitimate question as to how a historical event involving a nation relates to spiritual deliverance that is always personal. The Bible warrants the spiritual interpretation of history. After Paul reviewed some of Israel's history, he said that those things happened as examples to admonish the people living in the last days (1 Cor. 10:11). This "spiritual" take on history was expected to be employed by those living before the last days as well. For instance, Psalm 78 recounts Israel's history from the exodus out of Egypt all the way to David's kingdom. The psalmist introduces this historical overview by saying, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old" (v. 2 KJV). In other words, he is claiming that the events of history have a deeper meaning beyond the surface. There is more to biblical history than facts. There is a sense in which all history is redemptive, leading to the reversing of the curse, and as Geerhardus Vos said, "Revelation is the interpretation of redemption."² Stephen's sermon, which ended with his execution, is a classic illustration of this hermeneutic. Acts 7 records his speech, which is a historical overview of Old Testament history beginning with Abraham all the way to Solomon's constructing the temple. I remember reading this as a child and thinking that Stephen was just stalling. But now I know that he was preaching the gospel. He knew the theological implications of that history, and so did his executioners, who were "cut to the heart" when they heard him (Acts 7:54 KJV). Therefore, to read of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery as just a slice of ancient Near Eastern history is to

2. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 6.

miss the divinely intended message. It is real history, for sure, but there is more to it than facts.³

Answering this question more specifically requires a bit of a digression, but it is essential to justify my claim that Exodus teaches gospel lessons. There are two issues to consider: the relationship between Israel and the church and the revelational function of Israel.

The relationship between Israel and the church is a matter of considerable theological dispute, particularly between dispensational and covenant theologies. It is not my intention or within my scope to address the differences between these two often polar positions; rather, I want simply to offer my explanation, which reflects my covenant grid. Even adherence to the covenant grid allows some variance of interpretation, but this is my explanation. Defining the relationship between Israel and the church has implications for both soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) and eschatology (the doctrine of last things). My concern here regards soteriology. Most of the variance evidenced among adherents of covenant theology concerns eschatology, so I will leave that for another occasion.

How Israel and the church relate depends on whether they are viewed as organizations or as organisms. As organizations, they are different; as organisms, they are the same. Or in these terms, visible Israel is not the same as the visible church, but spiritual (invisible) Israel is the same as the spiritual (invisible) church. Being part of

3. Vos underscores this connection between historical facts and spiritual truths in his initial comments on the Exodus: "The exodus from Egypt is the Old Testament redemption. This is not an anachronistic, allegorizing manner of speaking. It is based on the inner coherence of Old Testament and New Testament religion itself. These two, however different their forms of expression, are yet one in principle. The same purpose and method of God run through both.... We can observe again how inseparably revelation through words is united to facts." *Biblical Theology*, 109. Vos then identifies many of the gospel themes that Exodus reveals (110–55), many of which I will develop as well. He identifies the themes because they are there, very much on the surface. But certainly Vos, a well-known Princeton theologian of the early twentieth century, is to be credited for shaping the analysis process. My guess is that if you would ask any Old Testament scholar in the Reformed tradition, at least of my generation, what one book had the greatest influence on their understanding of the Old Testament it would be Vos's *Biblical Theology*. It is not outdated.

visible Israel involves citizenship in an ethnic and political entity. Some aliens could take up residence and enjoy citizen status (like Ruth), but for the most part membership in visible Israel was a matter of DNA. Jesus gave His antagonists the benefit of the doubt that they were Jews when they claimed Abraham was their father (John 8:37). Paul claimed that he was part of visible Israel when he listed his credentials as being “of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5 KJV). The visible church as an organization is a “last days” entity whose structure and government are defined in the New Testament. It should be obvious that those portions of Scripture concerning the political entity of Israel do not apply to the church, and those portions that address the operations of the church do not apply to Israel. The Westminster Confession of Faith addresses this distinction regarding Israel in the context of the law of God: “To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require” (19.4).

But when viewed as an organism (a living entity), Israel and the church are the same. Spiritual (invisible) Israel and the spiritual (invisible) church are subsets of the visible organizations. This is the distinction Paul made in his classic exposition of divine election when he said, “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6 KJV). Similarly, Jesus, having acknowledged the DNA of the Pharisees, denied that they were the children of Abraham because of their behavior and instead identified the devil as their father (John 8:39, 44). Likewise, it is true that not all the church is the church. Tragically but really, there are people who have membership in the organization who are not genuinely converted (see Westminster Confession of Faith 25.5). The tares exist with the wheat (Matt. 13:24–30). The point is that there is one body of elect from every age and from every place on earth who have been saved on the same ground and through the same means. Article 27 of the Belgic Confession summarizes it clearly:

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost.

This Church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof, which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal king, which, without subjects He cannot be....

Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit. (See also Westminster Confession of Faith 25.1.)

With this understanding, the first members of the Christian church would have been Adam and Eve, who were then joined by all the saints who followed during the Old Testament era until now and to the end of the age. Jesus made this point clearly when He said regarding the great faith of the Roman centurion that “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11 KJV). This is why Paul could refer to the Gentile believers in the Galatian church as the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16 KJV).

Scripture designates this spiritual body in different ways—Israel, church, remnant, bride, body of Christ, and others—but the referent is the same. All of this is to say that the relationship between Israel and the church justifies learning the gospel lessons from the book of Exodus.

The revelational function of Israel is also an important factor that warrants learning the spiritual lessons from Exodus. I reiterate that all history from the fall is redemptive in its purpose and progression and that the coming of the Curse-Reverser is at the core of that redemptive purpose. Israel had a crucial role in God’s accomplishing His plan of redemption. To put it simply, there had to be an Israel if there was going to be a Christ. Paul expresses this truth in Romans 9:4–5, one of the most important Christological texts in the

New Testament: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (KJV).

The history recorded in Genesis 1–11 reveals that God’s special communication to humankind was universal and indiscriminate; that is, it was not limited to any one community or ethnic group. But everything changed after Babel, when God selected Abraham to be the father of nations, and especially the father of the nation into which and through which the Seed of the gospel promise was going to come (Genesis 12). From that time on—with a few odd exceptions—God restricted special revelation to Israel. Israel became the repository of God’s redemptive message (the focus of Rom. 9:4). Not only was Israel the receiver of the various words that God spoke in diverse ways (Heb. 1:1), but also the nation was the physical stock into which Christ would come (the focus of Rom. 9:5). As such, the nation was often the battleground for the conflict engaged by the serpent’s seed to prevent the coming of the woman’s Seed. So the serpent used Pharaoh, one of his seeds, to threaten God’s redemptive plan. Had Pharaoh succeeded in his plot to slay all the Hebrew male babies, there would have been no Israel. God’s intervention leading to the exodus, the way out of Egypt, was a necessary step in preserving Israel and vouchsafing the coming of Christ. The very fact of Exodus is gospel.

There is one final thought regarding why and how Exodus is a handbook of gospel lessons. On the surface, the book of Exodus records a national deliverance. The fact is that corporate national deliverance does not equate to individual spiritual salvation. Undoubtedly, some Israelites who escaped Egypt in the mass exodus ultimately perished in their sins. Undoubtedly, some Israelites who died in the wilderness without entering the promised land were genuinely converted—not the least of whom was Moses himself. The national covenant that constituted Israel as a nation affected external circumstances but not internal realities. Nonetheless, every

reference to the exodus is theologically significant. That not every Israelite who left Egypt was a genuine believer does not distract from the theological message beneath the surface. What God did in delivering the nation from Egyptian bondage illustrates what God does in delivering every individual whom He saves from sin's bondage. Proper interpretation of the history of the exodus requires identifying the spiritual counterpart to the national experience. The book of Exodus pictures the gospel through the history of Israel; it visualizes spiritual realities. Remember Psalm 78:2, which avers the divinely inspired and sanctioned hermeneutic for reviewing biblical history. The historical facts are like something else (the significance of the word *parables*). This is why I say that Exodus is a paradigm of salvation. This is why I want to explore the theology of Exodus using the Catechism's rubric of misery, deliverance, and gratitude. There is more to Exodus than history.

Questions for Thought

1. Reflect on how the misery, deliverance, gratitude rubric describes your life and experience.
2. Why can Genesis 3:15 be regarded as the key to understanding the Bible?
3. What is the difference between Israel as an organization and Israel as an organism? How does that difference apply to the church?
4. Who were the first members of the "church"? Why?
5. Why does the Bible record so many acts of hostility and aggression against Israel?