



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text

Exodus 2:1-10

Topic

By faith a Hebrew mother puts her baby boy in a waterproofed basket and places him in the reeds of the Nile River

Title

“Don’t Worry Baby”
(Everything Will Turn Out Alright)

“I believe in a lot of astrology,” said pop megastar Katy Perry in an interview in *GQ*.

Evidence suggests that over 90% of adults know their zodiac signs. Surveys also indicate that well over half agree that the signs’ character descriptions are accurate.

According to data from the National Science Foundation’s 2014 *Science and Engineering Indicators* study, the percentage of Americans who think astrology is “not at all scientific” *declined* from 62% in 2010 to just 55% in 2012.

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“Don’t Worry Baby”
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Interest in spirituality has been booming in recent years while interest in religion plummets, especially among millennials. The percentage of people between the ages of 18 and 29 who “never doubt the existence of God” fell from 81% in 2007 to 67% in 2012.

Meanwhile, more than half of young adults in the US believe astrology is a science, compared to less than 8% of the Chinese public.

The psychic services industry - which includes astrology, aura reading, mediumship, tarot-card reading and palmistry, among other metaphysical services - grew 2% between 2011 and 2016. It is now worth \$2 billion annually, according to industry analysis firms.

The median annual wage for a Fortune Teller is just under \$44,000.00. That works out to just over \$21.00 per hour for the nearly 16,000 Fortune Tellers in the United States.

These folks don't know the future; but we know Someone who does.

Greg Laurie is the first person I heard say, “I may not know what the future holds for me; but I know the One Who holds my future.”

Rather than crack open your fortune cookie from Panda Express, you can live for Jesus by faith, trusting your future to God.

I got to thinking about all this because, in our verses this morning, we see God’s ‘hold’ on the future as He preserves the life of Moses.

Egypt's Pharaoh had decreed the death of all male Hebrew babies. But the most powerful man on the earth was no match for the foreknowledge and providence of God.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Let Your Faith Be Encouraged By God's Foreknowledge, and #2 Let Your Faith Be Emboldened By God's Providence.

#1 Let Your Faith Be Encouraged By God's Foreknowledge

(v1-4)

God knew that Pharaoh's daughter would be bathing on a certain day, at a certain time, in a certain location; and He used that knowledge to preserve a baby placed in a basket.

It should come as no great shock to you that God knows the future. We call His knowledge of the future, foreknowledge.

All Christians agree that God has advance knowledge of future events and circumstances. Christians disagree on exactly how God's foreknowledge 'works,' especially when it comes to the free will of human beings, and God holding us individually responsible for our actions.

Some say His foreknowledge is based on His foreordination. I don't want to misrepresent them, but their position is that God knows exactly what is going to happen because He has ordained, or determined, it to happen. While they argue that you have free will, you are only free to choose what God has already ordained.

Others see foreknowledge differently. A theologian I like, Henry Thiessen, says, “Foreknowledge is not itself causative; we must not confuse foreknowledge with the predeterminate will of God. Free actions do not take place because they are foreseen; but they are foreseen because they will take place.”

Does it matter? Let’s see how these two views on foreknowledge affect our understanding of the Gospel:

- Those who believe God’s foreknowledge causes things to take place say of salvation that some men are thereby predestined to eternal life, while others are just as predestined to perish eternally. It’s called ‘double predestination,’ whereby your eternally destiny to Heaven or to Hell was chosen for you, by God, in eternity past.
- Those who believe God’s foreknowledge does not cause things to take place say God genuinely offers salvation to everyone, and that He foresees who will freely respond positively to His gracious offer of salvation and the enablement He provides to accept it.

I’ve just scratched the surface of a huge topic that we are never going to fully resolve this side of eternity. It is important that you realize both approaches to God’s foreknowledge are biblically-based; you can believe either one, or something in-between.

My question to those who favor a view of foreknowledge in which God predestines people to eternal punishment with no hope of responding to the Gospel is this: “Why would you want to believe something like that, since there is a totally biblical alternative?”

We can get so caught-up arguing about how God's foreknowledge works that it no longer is an encouragement to us. **It should encourage you to realize that God knows the future.** Since He does, you can trust Him *right now*, and the things He is leading you into.

The situation in Egypt, surrounding the birth of Moses, provides a great illustration of God's foreknowledge. He could lead a Hebrew mom into what to do, and she could trust Him - even though what she did seemed absurd.

Exo 2:1 And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi.

Later on we learn the man's name was Amram, and the wife's was Jochebed. Their baby is going to be named Moses; there's a Jewish tradition that his real name was Tov, meaning *good*. We'll also learn that they had two other children, Tov's older siblings - a girl named Miriam, and a boy named Aaron.

They had no advance preparation that their third child was going to be Israel's deliverer. Many Old Testament parents did have visits from angels, or prophets, telling them about their baby boy. Samson's parents come to mind. The Angel of the Lord visited them with information about the baby that would be born to them, and with instruction that he was to be a Nazirite from the womb.

No such info or instruction was given to Amram and Jochebed.

This tells me that I should simply go about my spiritual life depending upon the Lord, upon His leading. If I need a supernatural visit, He'll see to it.

But it isn't a prerequisite for serving Him. I can be encouraged
God knows the future without Him revealing it to me.

Exo 2:2 So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she
saw that he *was* a beautiful *child*, she hid him three months.

All babies are "beautiful" - *even the ones that aren't*. So what
does it mean, that Jochebed's son was "beautiful?"

Don't know, except she must have realized that there was
something special about him. Now, of course, every mom thought
their little baby boy was special; but in her case, he was.

Her hiding him reminds us of the awful situation the Hebrews
faced. Pharaoh, incited I'd say by Satan, had ordered the
midwives to kill all the male Hebrew babies. When that yielded no
result, he decreed to his own people they should cast any Hebrew
baby boy they saw into the Nile River.

The text doesn't say, but I think we can assume that the Egyptian
authorities went door-to-door, looking for baby boys to drown.

Human nature being what it is, it isn't unthinkable that fellow
Hebrews turned-in their neighbors for some small material gain.

How do you hide a baby for three months? How do you keep him
from giving himself away by crying? What is it like to live knowing
that any minute the authorities could crash the door and take your
precious baby boy? How awful was it to hear the wailing of moms
and dads whose babies were drowned?

I don't accentuate these details to elicit a visceral response - although it should. I do it because I think we can too quickly overlook the terror and the horror of living on this earth. While we track Moses, and his amazing preservation, thousands (at least) of other babies were being murdered. Mothers and fathers were crying. More than one family must be wondering, "Where is God in all this?"

The answer is that He was right there, in the midst of their suffering, working to deliver them. His plan involved this baby growing up and confronting Pharaoh. His plan has been unfolding for about six thousand years. We can be sure that it isn't taking a moment longer than necessary.

Think of it this way: Looking at all the religions, and all the philosophies, men have suggested, do any of *them* solve the problem of human suffering? They do not, and they can not, because they have no solution for indwelling sin. God's plan eradicates sin, and will restore all things. But it takes time.

Exo 2:3 But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river's bank.

I don't think it's a stretch to say that Jochebed was led by God in this endeavor. It doesn't seem as though other moms were launching their babies downstream.

Exo 2:4 And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

Miriam is estimated to be in her early teens. Her surveillance might indicate that the family was hoping their baby would be found, and cared for. But there was no guarantee he wouldn't be a crocodile snack. It was a lot to put on a young person.

I think we should expect more from our youth. I'm not saying we shouldn't shelter them from the world, but there are times they need to step-up and serve the Lord.

We're going to see in the next set of verses what God foreknew. But Jochebed didn't foresee it. She was operating entirely by faith.

In the Book of Hebrews we're told, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command" (11:23).

Building his little ark, and placing it in the reeds, were acts of faith. Amram and Jochebed had no assurances their baby boy would survive. As I said earlier, it was an absurd plan.

By faith they trusted in God's foreknowledge - in His seeing the future. God would preserve the baby.

Faith in God's foreknowledge doesn't always mean we will experience a positive outcome. Over the years, many believers have shared with me that God came to them in a verse or in a dream or by some strong inner impression, to comfort them, just days or weeks before some personal tragedy struck. It was to comfort them in their sorrow.

I want to spend another few moments on this, especially addressing those who are enduring afflictions and struggles. It may not seem all that encouraging that God foreknew your trouble, and didn't help you avoid it.

I think of the apostle Paul. When Paul was saved, there in Damascus, Ananias came to him and told him, "how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). God foresaw his beatings, and stoning, and imprisonments, and shipwrecks. He foresaw the Judaizers dogging Paul's footsteps, and believers who would mistreat him, and abandon him.

Life is hard, and the Christian life is harder still. Whether you are experiencing a time of triumph or of tragedy, it should be encouraging to understand that God knows the future. Walk towards it by faith - in the good times, and especially in the bad.

#2 Let Your Faith Be Emboldened By God's Providence

(v5-10)

"Providence" is a word that does not occur anywhere in the Bible, but is taught everywhere in it. For our purposes, providence means "the continuous activity of God whereby He sees to it that nothing thwarts His plan to redeem and restore His creation, and especially the human race."

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve exercised their free will and disobeyed God's one command. Their sin brought death into God's perfect creation. All of creation is now fallen. We're told,

Rom 8:21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise that He would come into human history, as the Seed of the woman, to right what was wrong. Ever since that promise was made, God has been working in and through human history to fulfill His plan. He provides for that plan, seeing to it that nothing and no one can thwart it.

The son of Amram and Jochebed was part of that plan, in that God would come into our world born of a Jewish woman. Thus the Hebrews must be delivered from Egypt, and this baby was the one who would do it.

Exo 2:5 Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it.

God foresaw this, and by it He would provide for His plan to redeem creation. The timing was incredible; it was no coincidence; God was at work.

At the same time, there was no guarantee, humanly speaking, that Pharaoh's daughter would be favorable to the Hebrew baby. After all, the Egyptians were commanded to murder them - not nurture them.

Without exaggerating, the entire fate of God's eternal plan to redeem and restore creation, including the human race, was going to depend on Pharaoh's daughter discovering and defending a cast-off baby boy.

I keep thinking of this from the point of view of a strategy session in Heaven. Can you imagine God laying out this plan? It seems doomed from the get-go, with no chance of succeeding. Almost everything could have gone wrong.

Exo 2:6 And when she opened *it*, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Commentators speculate that it was because the baby was circumcised that she knew, for sure, he was Hebrew.

I can only wonder if one of the angels was dispatched to pinch the baby at just the right moment? He cried; she had compassion. Until now, the only impression you had of Egypt was that of Pharaoh. He was a madman, ordering the slaughter of babies. Yet in his own household was a daughter who was filled with compassion.

It's great to be raised in a Christian home, but if you're not, you can still find and follow Jesus. It may seem to be a disadvantage, but it need not be.

Exo 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

What's the first thing you think when you discover an abandoned baby and he's crying? He must be hungry.

Miriam's presence wasn't seen as being suspicious. It could be that Hebrew children were regularly present along the Nile. At any rate, she was inspired to suggest a solution to the baby's need for feeding - a "nurse from the Hebrew women."

Exo 2:8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother.

Unbelievable. Who could have predicted this turn of events?

Exo 2:9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give *you* your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

Ladies, wouldn't you like to be paid for raising your kids? I mean, you're happy to do it for free; but if you could get paid for it...
Bonus!

Most of this weening must have taken place in the Hebrew home. With her dad's insane decree to murder boy babies still in effect, Pharaoh's daughter must have arranged for this baby boy to be protected.

Great - but think about it. As Jochebed was suckling her baby boy, and he was cooing and burping, right next door some Hebrew mom had lost her baby to the violence of Egypt.

Did the other Hebrew families look upon this baby as representative of God's mercy to save? Or were they bitter and resentful for their intense personal anguish?

Exo 2:10 And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Pharaoh's daughter must have had regular visits with Moses during the three years (we estimate) that he was being breastfed. I can't imagine she saw him for a few minutes the day she rescued him, then not again for a few years.

It seems that they went through some sort of formal adoption, since Moses is going to grow up as her son, as an Egyptian.

While Moses was growing up, God was at work providing for His plan of redemption and restoration in other ways. In Genesis 15:13, the Lord told Abraham, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years." It was foreseen by God, and He would provide for His plan through it.

As you read on in Genesis 15, in verses 14-16 it says, "But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions... And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

Interesting. God would accomplish two things on account of Israel's servitude in Egypt:

1. First, He would use them to judge, then spoil, Egypt. We'll see Egypt's gods destroyed one-by-one as God brings ten plagues against them. When the Israelites left Egypt following the tenth plague, they were told to ask the Egyptians for items of value for their journey. "The people of Israel... asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians" (Exodus 12:35-36).
2. Second, God was waiting for the Amorites. They were the current occupants of the Promised Land, and God was waiting for their "iniquity to become full." I interpret that to mean God was giving them time to repent, and turn to Him, before He had to destroy them.

So yes, Israel suffered greatly for 400 years in Egypt. But the result was that God used them to judge two wicked nations, and to spoil one's wealth taking it for themselves.

Also because of Israel's time in Egypt:

- We have the story of Joseph - another amazing tale of God's foresight and providence.
- We have the Passover, which becomes the great type of God sacrificing Himself on the Cross for the sin of the world.
- We have tale after tale of God's faithfulness in leading and guiding His people to the Promised Land.

Take away their sojourn of suffering in Egypt, and you lose many powerful images of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Looking back, any believing Jew would say, “It was all worth it in order that God might be better able to communicate the Gospel to those who are perishing.”

The lashes of the taskmasters, even the murder of the babies, are not as eternally significant as even one soul receiving Jesus Christ and avoiding the horrors of the Lake of Fire.

Israel’s 400 years in Egypt are a little picture of the big picture we’re always talking about. God is not willing any would perish, but that all would receive eternal life. In His longsuffering, He waited 400 years for Egypt and for the Amorites. In His longsuffering, His chosen ones suffer, along with the rest of the world, on account of mankind’s sin.

Are you willing to suffer so that God can save more people for eternity? That’s a better way of describing the problem of suffering, and the continuing presence of evil in the world.

The apostle Paul once went so far as to say, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh...” (Romans 9:3). If he could switch places with the Jews, and they be saved while he was damned, he’d do it. Paul understood suffering within God’s longsuffering.

God’s longsuffering waits, and the waiting hurts, because of sin and Satan.

We see Jochebed emboldened in her faith. It's one thing to have faith in God; it's another to put your baby in a basket and believe God will provide for him.

Our faith can be emboldened as we understand God's providence.

Do you want one massive example of providence in recent history? That would be the rebirth of the nation of Israel in her ancient homeland. It was necessary for the plan of God for the Jews to be back in their land. Against all odds, political and spiritual, there they are, by God's providence.

In fact the rebirth of the nation followed on the heels of Satan's attempt to exterminate the Jews in the Holocaust. Instead God provided them their permanent home.

Are you a believer in Jesus Christ? Are you backslidden in your walk with Jesus Christ? Resolve those issues today - right now. Surrender to Jesus; be forgiven; repent of your sins.

Rom 10:8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):

Rom 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rom 10:10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

