

Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

History 114 Exodus

Break out your maps and histories as we travel again in our time machine to examine history & geography through a biblical worldview. Last month we covered the ten plagues of the Exodus, so this month let's begin a journey back to the holy land through a very well-known sequence of events. Our trek begins on the 14th of Nisan (late March or early April), 1446 BC (aligning Jewish and Gregorian calendars is messy business). So how many people left Egypt? These people descended from the 70 individuals who immigrated to the land of Goshen. They were very prolific; according to Exodus and Numbers, there were 600,000 men over the age of 20 on foot. If we figure all of these men were in households of at least 3 including themselves, then you have a population of over 2 million. While this is a very large number, many logistical studies have been done that verify that the biblical account (while difficult to manage) is entirely possible. While we accept miraculous events on faith, simple logistic calculations can also verify the feasibility of a historic narrative.

For fear of infringing on copyrights, I will suggest you go to one of the following places to look at a map of the Sinai Peninsula as you continue to read my description: page 120 of your Lutheran Study Bible, page 106 of your NIV study bible, or one of the following links (good maps with possible exodus tracks on them). You can just google "Exodus Map" and get a lot of options, but always remember to check the source.

The next datable event is about one month later when they arrive in the Wilderness of Sin, which is believed to be somewhere on the western side of the Sinai Peninsula. Before they got there they must first have crossed the "Yam Suph" (Hebrew for "reed sea"). This event is often downplayed by those who seek to "demythologize" the Bible. There are some key elements of the account and known geography that can help us to better understand this miraculous event. First let's talk about the reed sea, The geography between the Egyptian Delta and the Sinai Peninsula has changed greatly over the past 3400 years. It is generally agreed based on archeological, biological, carbon 14, and dendrochronology information that this region was much more temperate in past millennia and has been becoming more and more arid as time progresses. Translation: it used to be greener, wetter, and milder than it is now. Another major change came 145 years ago in 1869 when the French company that spent 10 years digging the Suez Canal, finished its work and thus drained more water from the delta area between Ancient Pithom and the modern day Bitter Lakes. There are a number of possible sites around Ismailia and the Bitter Lake region that could very well be the site of the miraculous crossing. However, even if the area they crossed was in a place that was marshy grassland, there are a couple of important insights to draw from the account that are miraculous. First, the waters parted and they walked on **dry ground**, all two million plus of them. Second, the water separated and came back together at God's command through Moses. And finally, when the water returned to its normal course, it completely **covered Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen**...not one remained. This was not just wheels getting stuck in the mud; this was complete inundation with water and drowning.

So enough about the "reed sea"; let's continue our trek. About two months after leaving Egypt they came to Mount Sinai. The traditional location for this mountain is at the southern tip of the peninsula, and is today called "Jebul Musa" Arabic for "Mountain of Moses". There is a monastery there; St Catherine's, which claims to have inside its walls the burning bush through which God spoke to Moses. There are three other possible sites; Jebel Al-lawz, to the east across the Gulf of Aqaba, and to the north, Jebel Sin Bisher and Jebel Magharah. Each of these locations have legitimate claims that make them plausible sites for the Mount Sinai of the Exodus. Both the reed sea and Mt Sinai locations may be lost to history, but that is what you would expect because these were very transitory events according to their narratives that would have left no real evidence of having taken place. Untended trails will disappear in only months in wilderness areas, such as those where both of these events took place. They also built no permanent buildings, they were there for short periods of time, and these events took place thousands of years ago. Even their food which was miraculously provided, and their trash dumps would have all degraded to basic elements by now. It would be more amazing if we were to find any tangible evidence of these events happening. However, we have a reliable eyewitness account of them

so there is no reason to question if they happened, while we can continue to explore where they happened. Next month...wondering in the wilderness, see you then.

In Christ,
Pastor Portier