

God Redeems His People
Selected Passages from Exodus
Old Testament Sermon Series on Exodus
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
September 7, 2014

TEXTS: Exodus 1:8-13, 1:22-2:5 (basket); Exodus 3:1-8a (bush); Exodus 11:9-12:13 (Passover lamb); Exodus 14:26-31 (Parting of the sea); Exodus 19:16-20 (Sinai); Exodus 20:1-17 (Ten commandments); Exodus 25:1-8 (Tabernacle); Exodus 34:1-7 (Golden calf); Exodus 40:33-38 (Ark of the covenant/Glory of God)

What a privilege to be gathered here this morning as God's people to learn of His ways, to draw near to Him, and to hear an entire book of the Bible set before us in just a few minutes. This morning, we begin a new series on the book of Exodus. *Exodus* means *going out*. The Exodus from Egypt is the template of redemption in the Bible. It should grip our hearts and fire our imagination. It's in the book of Exodus that we find out who the Lord is and who we are as people. I love the Exodus. I love it for many reasons, and I want to give you just four of those reasons.

The first reason I love Exodus is that **Exodus is the Gospel of the Old Testament**. It is the moment when God fulfills the promises He had spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He acts to redeem His people with a mighty outstretched arm; He pays for their lives with the blood of the Passover Lamb; He leads them out with the dramatic parting of the sea, brings them to the mountain where He dwells, and enters into covenant with them. Exodus is the framework for all future hope of God's action in the Bible, including the Person and work of Christ, as we will see.

The second reason I love the Exodus is that **Exodus forms the literary center of gravity in the entire Old Testament**. God's people come to the base of Mount Sinai in Exodus 19, and they stay there all through the rest of Exodus, all through Leviticus, all the way through Numbers chapter 10. If you were to draw a bell curve of the first five books of the Bible, the base of Mount Sinai would be at the vast, large central section of that curve. There are 120 passages, just in the Old Testament, that refer back to the Exodus. It is **the** event. The Exodus redefines the entire worshiping life and calendar of God's people in Scripture.

The third reason I love Exodus is that **Exodus reveals to us the character, the identity, and the will of God**. Exodus teaches us who God is. It is in Exodus 3 that we learn the name of God, *Yahweh*, the living God. It is in Exodus that we discover the character of God, that He releases those who are imprisoned and oppressed. It is the character of God to act in a mighty way to see, to hear, to remember, and to respond to prayer. I love that in Exodus God remembers and

records the names of two Hebrew midwives, and yet leaves the name of the powerful Pharaoh unmentioned. That is the God of the Bible. He sees these two women who fear Him and disobey the king's command, and their names are in the Bible, but the most powerful man on the earth at that time is not named. We see the character of God revealed in the Scriptures. There is nothing like the 10 Commandments in all of ancient literature. We take it for granted, are perhaps overfamiliar with it, and yet we have to remember that the setting of the 10 Commandments is God's saving actions and then the revelation of His character and His will. There is no God like the God of the Bible who is moral and righteous in all of His ways, and to emulate Him is what He requires of His people. Nahum Sarna says this memorably:

“A creator-god who withdraws from his creation and leaves his creatures entirely to their own devices is a functionless deity, an inactive being, remote and aloof from the world of men and women. He represents no ideal, makes no demands, enjoins no obligations, provides no moral governance of the world, imposes no moral law. Human strivings rest in no assurance of being other than unreality and futility, and the human race is bereft of ultimate destiny.

“Not so the Creator-God of the Bible. He is vitally concerned with the welfare of His creatures, intensely involved in their fate and fortune. An unqualified moral Being, He insistently demands human imitation of His moral attributes. He imposes His law on the human race, and He judges the world in righteousness. History, therefore, is the arena of [His] divine activity.”

This is the God we meet in Scripture.

The fourth reason I love Exodus is that **Exodus defines our identity as the people of God**. We discover that we are a rescued, saved, redeemed people, saved by nothing of our own doing, but by the mighty, outstretched arm of God. Then we discover that we are to be His treasured possession in all the earth. We discover that God rescues us to bring us into covenant relationship with Him, and that the covenant carries with it great privilege of an exclusive relationship to God. It also carries with it certain restraints and obligations, and it involves a sacred mission to reflect God's character to the world. Exodus is not about freedom in an abstract way. Often it is misquoted, and alert your ears to this misquotation. You will hear people say: “The Exodus is about saying ‘Let my people go. Let’s just be free!’” is not the biblical vision of freedom, and it is not the full quotation. The full quotation is: “Let My people go so that they can serve Me.” Freedom in Scripture is found in walking in God's ways. We see in Scripture that doing whatever seems right to you at the moment is oppression and tyranny. That is not real freedom. Exodus defines our identity as well. It is no wonder that the apostle Paul's teacher Gamaliel is recorded as having said in Mishnah, *Pesahim*, 9.5:

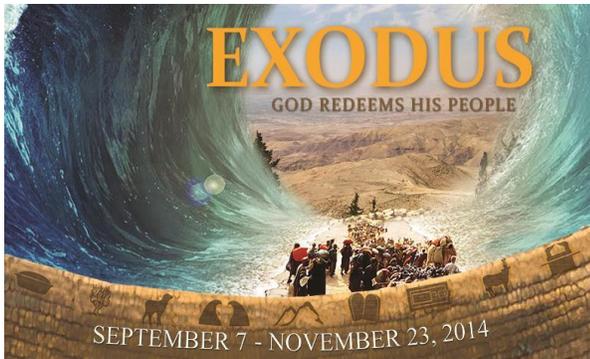
“In every generation a person must so regard themselves as if they themselves came

forth out of Egypt.”

Brevard Childs, a Yale professor, picks up on this language. He expresses it this way:

“It is incumbent upon each new generation to study the meaning of the Exodus afresh, to have the contemporary situation of the church addressed by its word, and to anticipate a fresh appropriation of its message through the work of God’s Holy Spirit.”

As we begin this series, I want to invite you inside Exodus. Don't make the mistake of reading

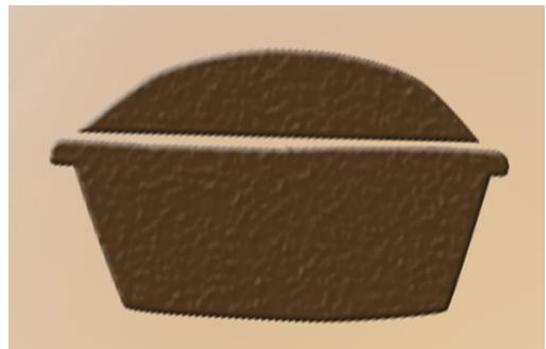


Exodus as an outsider; read it as an insider. This is our story in faith: Christ is **our** Passover lamb as Paul will tell a group of former pagans, like us, now believers. This morning, I want to try to tell a brief overview of whole story. This central graphic of the series captures this one dominant image of God’s splitting the waters and bringing out a mixed multitude of people, as we read in Exodus 12:38:

“A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds -- a great deal of livestock.” (NKJV)

It says it wasn't just ethnic Israelites that came out, but that there was a whole group of Egyptians that said: “Your God is real and true and we’re going with you.” So whether you are native to the story, or just finding your way into it, this is your story if you have believed in Christ. On the bottom of the graphic, we see a set of icons, and they will be like a status bar for us throughout the series. These icons tell the story of the whole book of Exodus, and we want to look at that together.

The first opening section of Exodus tells the story of God's saving actions around this basket. Pharaoh oppresses the descendants of Jacob's family, who have swollen in size and multiplied. The blessing of God in Genesis is upon them, and so Pharaoh conscripts them into slavery. Yet, they still multiplied and increased, so he tells the midwives to kill the male children. They disobey his order, and the people continue to expand. Finally, the Pharaoh makes a decision to launch into genocide, that every male child would be killed. Against this dark background, we read that the God of the Bible has a savior, a deliverer, raised up right in the midst of Pharaoh's own court. A child is born, and the child is laid in a basket. The word used for basket is an unusual word in Hebrew. It is actually the same word as for *ark*. This little saving ark calls to mind the image of Noah as the ark is lined with tar



and pitch, like the ark of safety. Inside is the agent of deliverance and salvation. It is God's sovereign hand working in such a way that Moses' life is protected and preserved, and he ends up being raised in the court of Pharaoh himself. It is God's sovereign plan and protection. We will read more of this and learn more next week.

Next in the line of icons is the burning bush. The bush is also named in an unusual way. It is called a Sinai; it is a mini Sinai. Moses, at this time, is in the wilderness tending the flocks of his



father-in-law, and there, the angel of the Lord comes and meets with him in this theophany, this appearance of God in glory. The bush is not consumed; Moses goes into God's presence, and the Lord says in Exodus 3:6-7:

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I have indeed seen the misery of My people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering."

Then God says the most remarkable thing in Exodus 3:8:

"So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

I liken this to the incarnation of the Old Testament. God says: "I have come down Myself to save." The God of Glory in Scripture steps inside the narrative and says: "I am here to save and rescue, and I am sending you." So, the man who spent 40 years growing up in Egypt learning Egyptian, learning the customs of the court, is sent to speak to Pharaoh. Then, Moses will bring out 600,000 families and lead them in the wilderness, the very same wilderness that he has been living in for the last 40 years. Do you think God knows what He's doing? Does God really know how to prepare you for what He is calling you to do? He does, and whatever you lack in preparation, He will supply. Moses goes with his brother Aaron, which is a powerful lesson about not ministering alone, and they speak to Pharaoh. God declares war on Pharaoh in a set of chapters in the middle Exodus. God says: "I will bring you out." When Pharaoh is summoned to release God's people by the decree of the living God, Yahweh, he asks one of the worst questions in the Bible in Exodus 5:2:

"Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go?"

Don't ever ask that question!

The answer to Pharaoh's question is 10 waves of glory and splendor and power climaxing in the 10th plague. The plagues are described more often in the Bible as wonders, or signs, and the

climactic one is the sign of the Passover Lamb. God's people are instructed to feast and to eat of this lamb and to place the blood of the lamb on the top of their doorways so that death would pass over them. In this way, they would be purchased, their lives redeemed.



The celebration of Passover leads to the parting of the sea. In Exodus 14 and 15, God brings His people out. They seem like they're in the clear, and then in Exodus 14, God says: "Why don't you turn around and go pin yourself in on the edge

of the sea?" Pharaoh then makes a terrible decision thinking, "They've lost their way. Their God couldn't carry through." So, Pharaoh goes in hot pursuit, and the Lord divides these waters. I love the icon for this because you see the waters dividing around a heart of love, because God saves His people. When the moment comes for salvation to be realized, God says to His people through Moses: "Stand and see the salvation that God will accomplish for you." Israel fires no shots, adds nothing to their redemption.



The redemption from Egypt leads to Covenant. It leads to Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19, God says to the people: "Come to this place to meet with God," and they meet with Him in glory. When Moses asked God: "How will I know that You are really with me?" God says to him in Exodus 3:12:



"I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

As they say, the ultimate proof of the pudding is in the eating: the ultimate proof of God's faithfulness is in the arrival. The ultimate proof that trusting in Christ is true is when we stand in

His presence in Glory with one another and say, "Hallelujah, amen!" We get to sing at least two songs. I like long songs, songs that you really settle into. My family jokes with me about the time we had a banquet, and we were playing a CD of our friend Monir singing Arabic Christian music. I was listening all throughout this piece, and the song kept going on and on and on and

on, and I was loving it. My family said, "Dad, that is a long song." "Yeah, I know," I replied. "I was really settling into it." Then, I looked at the CD player and saw I had actually pushed play and repeat, so this one song that is really just a four-minute song had turned into a 45-minute ballad of praise.

In Revelation 15:3, it says that we get to sing the song of the Lamb, and we get to sing the song of Moses in Exodus 15:3-4. These are great songs, and we will sing them forever. God comes on Mount Sinai and says: "I will be your God; you will be My people." He enters into covenant with us. He reveals His will on the tablets of the law. These commands are precious. They are precious words reflecting God's righteousness and character. God, after making covenant, then condescends to dwell in the midst of His people. There is really nothing special about you or me, but there is something special if God dwells among us. This room is not special because it has Indiana River Creek stone columns, although there probably aren't many spaces in Cincinnati with the stone. This space is special because God is here. There have been people here since eight o'clock this morning praying that God would move in our midst. All of your ears have already been prayed for; all of your hearts have been prayed for, that the Word would come in and abide. Moses says to God in Exodus 33:16:



"How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

But, God says in Exodus 25:8:



"Then have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them."

This is an icon of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place in the midst of His people. It is a little scale model of what is in heaven. The next icon reveals the extent of God's mercy.

While Moses is up on the mountain getting the plans for the tabernacle, the people grow impatient and build a golden calf, breaking the covenant, shattering the first three of the 10 Commandments. Yet, God, in an unprecedented scope of mercy,

reveals His character to Moses after this incident by proclaiming in Exodus 34:6:

"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. . . ."

This was John Calvin's favorite verse of the entire Bible, showing the extent of God's mercy, forgiving rebellion and sin.



Exodus concludes on the other side of mercy with the Ark of the Covenant and the Glory of God filling the camp. The Tabernacle was set up, and the Glory of the living God does dwell in the midst of the people. We see that the journey of redemption into covenant leads to worship, and it is a worship that is continuing to this very moment.



I am very excited to pursue Exodus together, to be encountered by the Lord within it. I want to apply this in three ways:

Number one: I want you to impress the scene of the parting of the sea on your heart. This scene is one of the great scenes of the entire Bible. If this scene is on your heart, it's like having one of the key notes of the scale. It's amazing that with just so few notes, all music can be played; so few notes, but you have to have those notes. This is one of the notes that you must have: the parting of the sea, opening the path of redemption; God's making a way for His people to cross into the freedom of following Him. The redeemed are a mixed lot, a mixed multitude God has claimed. This path leads to the mountain of God to meet with Him, and in the far distance, a future inheritance. Impress this scene upon your heart.

Number two: I want to challenge you to immerse yourself in Exodus this fall. I have been saying around the office for a while that all roads lead to the Exodus, and that is really going to be true this fall. I want to challenge you to be part of a small group on Exodus. We are going to be looking at Exodus using the study guide: *Be Delivered; Finding Freedom by Following God*. If your schedule doesn't allow you to be in a group, I encourage you to read this devotionally yourself. If you want to go even a little deeper, I recommend a book called: *Exploring Exodus* by Nahum Sarna. It is a very readable, profound book, and each paragraph rests on a mountain of learning and a lifetime of study.

Number three: This is a pastoral application, and that application is that the message of the

Book of Exodus is a message of being set free from unbroken toil. Some of you today are in slavery. In your working every day, maybe God has been crowded out. You haven't been given the freedom of following Him. Maybe, for some of you, that slavery has been imposed from outside, and you're crying out for God to act. For others, though, that slavery is self-imposed, and secondary, or lesser things, have crowded out the life that God wants to live through you. The God of Scripture, the God of Exodus, is a Redeemer and a Rescuer. He rescues us so that we can belong to Him, and this is where we find freedom: "Let My people go that they may serve Me."

Communion:

It's a great privilege this morning, as we begin this series, to come to this table. This is not the table of Kenwood Baptist Church; this is the table of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the table on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He told His disciples: "I eagerly long to eat this Passover with you." Jesus took bread in the context of that meal, and He broke it. He said: "This is My body which is broken for you." He lifted the cup of the Passover meal, and He said: "This cup is the cup of the New Covenant in My blood poured out for you." We cannot understand what Jesus is speaking of without the Exodus, and yet Jesus calls us this morning to be free and follow Him. If you have received Him as your Savior, you are welcome to partake of His broken body and shed blood. Maybe you would desire to do that now for the first time. I am a very excited to share this journey with each of you this fall, to see our God revealed, draw us close to Himself, and understand who we are as a result. Would you pray with me to prepare our hearts for communion with the Lord?

Heavenly Father, we praise You this morning. We praise You for new life; we praise You for salvation, redemption, and rescue. We praise You, Lord, for this great action of Yours on our behalf. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You are our Passover Lamb, slain for us. We thank You for Your broken body and shed blood and Your invitation to us this morning to live in Covenant as Your people.

Amen.