

Expecting Christ in Exodus
The LORD Will Protect the Savior's Birth

Exodus 3:1-10; Matthew 2:12-21

Advent 2014 Sermon Series

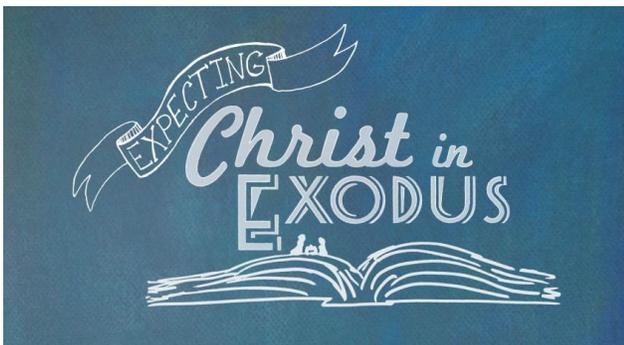
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

November 30, 2014

TEXTS: Exodus 3:1-10; Matthew 2:12-21

It's a new season in the church year, and God has good things in store for us. This morning we



turn our attention to our Advent series, and we begin at this time of year to draw our attention to the coming of Christ the Savior of the world. Together, we are going to explore the riches of Scripture as we learn to expect Christ in Exodus. My prayer for us as a community is that we will see Christ through the eyes of those who first saw Him, that we will behold Him in the ways

that they did, and that we will share Him with the same arguer and zeal that they did.

The New Testament opens with God's own commissioned artworks that depict the birth, ministry, and mission of His beloved Son. The first portrait of Jesus Christ that we are given in the New Testament belongs to Matthew. It is a profound decision and intention of Matthew to link the Old and New Testaments in the Person of Christ. This morning, I want to explore together the parallels that Matthew sees between the first redeemer, Moses, and the second Redeemer, Christ. We see in both of these cases that the Lord sovereignly protects the Savior's birth, and in presenting Jesus as the second Moses, Matthew is not denigrating Him, but in fact he is giving Him one of the greatest compliments that he can possibly give. We have two passages of Scripture this morning which at first may seem utterly unrelated, and yet, upon closer reflection, we see these two texts are profoundly related. In fact, they share the same story. My prayer is for us to see something beautiful in the Scripture this morning. My own heart has been stirred to see the beauty of Christ presented in this way.

Let's look first at the portrait of the first redeemer. We have the distinct advantage of having just finished a 12-week sermon series on the Exodus, so I pray these things are fresh in our minds. The Book of Exodus begins with a genealogy, as we see in Exodus 1:1-4:

"These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his

family: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali; Gad and Asher.”

Genealogies in Scripture gather up the story so far. They signal the beginning of a new section. They are the place in Scripture that marks that God's great work in the world is striding forward and beginning a new chapter. So, the Book of Exodus begins with this genealogy. It tells us that God is at work anew. Secondly, the Exodus genealogy marks the ending of 400 years of affliction and sorrow, 400 years between promise and fulfillment, 400 years between the exile and return as God had promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16:

“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

The transition in Exodus from promise to fulfillment dawns with the birth of a child, the birth of a redeemer, a savior, a deliverer. This is God's answer to the plight of his people. In Exodus 2:1, we read against the large backdrop, this geopolitical backdrop, we read somewhat innocently against these 400 years of oppression and slavery, a promise waiting to be fulfilled. We hear God speak in Exodus 2:1 of the birth of a child:

“Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.”

God's answer in Scripture is the birth of this child. We see in Exodus that worldly powers seek to destroy the child at birth. Moses' mother, when she could hide him no longer, placed the child in a basket coated with tar and pitch and set the child in the banks along the river Nile. Yet, as this worldly power swirls around, we see God's sovereign hand guiding. Nahum Sarna says:

“No reader of the text is left in doubt that the developments described represent a contest between God and the pharaoh. The pharaoh deals shrewdly, but is ineffective. The outcome is actually and mysteriously quite the opposite of what is expected. With transparent clarity, the impression is compellingly conveyed, that behind the complex of events seemingly unfolding in a secular way, there is at work the divine will controlling and directing human affairs.”

The child moves down the river in this basket and God's sovereign hand not only protects the savior's birth, but raises him up, gives him a name that will encapsulate his mission, and in the end, it's the king who dies, while the child lives. The child grew, and we read in Exodus 2:10:

“When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son.”

She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.'"

Ultimately, it is Pharaoh who dies, while the child is spared, and this infant son grows up within the realm among the people that he will save. We stressed throughout the fall that Exodus is the template of redemption in the Bible. It is mentioned more than 120 times within the Old Testament when the prophets look forward to the next great action of God in the world. They liken it to a second Exodus. The prophets are filled with second Exodus imagery and language, but to contemplate a second Exodus begs the question of where is the second Moses? Who will lead this second Exodus of redemption? There is a phrase in rabbinic literature that occurs in dozens of passages. Rabbinic literature is filled with the thoughts of devout people reading the Scriptures, reflecting on the correspondence between this first great saving action of God and this second final great saving action of God. This repeated phrase occurs in many places. One of them is a quote attributed to Rabbi Berekiah in *Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:18*. He says this simply:

"As the first redeemer was, so shall the latter Redeemer be."

And so, we encounter this passage, this thought, that there is some degree of correspondence between the first redemption and the second. Moses himself said in the Advent reading for this morning, Deuteronomy 18:15:

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like Me from among you, from your brothers--it is to Him you shall listen."

Likewise, in Deuteronomy 18:18:

"I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him."

Now we turn to Matthew's portrait, the portrait of the second Redeemer. We look at the opening statements of the New Testament, and what do we find? We find that just as in the Book of Exodus the narrative begins with a genealogy, so in Matthew 1:1, the narrative begins with a genealogy:

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

God's activity in the world is striding forward; the genealogy gathers up the story so far. It signals to us the beginning of a new section: God's work in the world. I remember reading my very first Bible as a non-Christian, a small Gideon New Testament, and I didn't make it out of the first chapter. I thought the first verse was good, and then it was a list of names, none of which was meaningful to me. I wondered, as many wonder: "What's all the hubbub about? Why is this the best-selling book of all time, every year?" It was veiled to me; it was closed, but now, the more I know the Scripture, I find the opening statement Matthew thrilling. He is gathering up the whole narrative. When I see genealogy, I get excited, and I want you to get

excited, too, when you see a list of names in Scripture. This is a signal that God's work is stepping forward in the world.

Just as the genealogy in Exodus marks the ending of 400 years of exile, so Matthew's genealogy marks the ending of 400 years of exile and return. Matthew tells us the point of this genealogy. It's not just to display his knowledge of ancient records of families. The point of Matthew's genealogy is to sum up the story so far and say it is moving forward. Matthew 1:17 says:

"So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations."

In other words, this is Matthew's way of saying the exile is ending in the birth of this Child, just like in the book of Exodus. He tells us, then, the birth of Jesus, and narrates it with some specificity in detail. In Matthew 1:21, he says Jesus is given a name that encapsulates His mission in the world:

"She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Just as Moses is given the name *he will draw the people out of the water*, so Jesus is given the name *He will save the people from their sins*. Matthew is trying to get our attention to see this correspondence. Just as in the Book of Exodus, a worldly power seeks to destroy the redeemer, the child, at birth, so in the New Exodus, a worldly power seeks to destroy the Child at birth. When Jesus was born in the city of David in Bethlehem in the days of Herod, wise men came from afar with this question: "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" Herod was distraught, and the whole city with him, for good reason. When Herod is distraught, people die. Herod killed his wives; he killed several of his sons; he sought to guarantee mourning at his death by rounding up the leading citizens of Jerusalem and placing them in the theater with the command: "When I die, kill all these people so at least someone will be crying and mourn my passing." As a sidebar, this is a great example of when it's good to disobey the king. Herod does die, and the soldier who was to carry out that action arrived at the theater and said: "We are not doing that."

Herod seeks the life of the Child. Matthew reminds us, then, of the appearance an angel of the Lord who instructs Joseph in Matthew 2:13:

"Rise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy Him."

Then, just as in the first Exodus, God sovereignly protects the savior's birth, so in the last Exodus, God sovereignly protects Jesus, the Savior's birth and infant years. We read in Matthew 2:14-15:

“And he rose and took the Child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.”

Matthew tells us that this is all happening not by accident, not by coincidence, not by literary fancy, but this is happening by God's design and plan and purpose. Matthew tells us in Matthew 2:15:

“This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Hosea], ‘Out of Egypt I called My son.’”

Matthew is inviting us to see this correspondence, explicitly that Jesus is leading this new and last Exodus, that He is the Moses who is to come. When Herod saw that he been tricked, he became furious, and he issues a decree, like Pharaoh of old, to kill the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding district. Matthew tells us that this happened to fulfill Jeremiah 31:15:

“A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more.”

The weeping of Jeremiah 31:15 is the weeping that comes at the end of the exile. Jeremiah 31 is one of the great passages of the whole Old Testament. It is the only passage that describes the coming New Covenant, and it is the only sad verse in this whole chapter. Matthew draws our eyes and ears to this passage, signaling yet again the time of fulfillment is come. So, as with the first Exodus, the proud king dies, and the Child lives. We read that Herod dies, and the angel of the Lord appears again and says in Matthew 2:19:

“Rise, take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead.”

I remember one cold winter morning getting up early for devotions, You know, sometimes when it's cold, it's hard to get up, right? Sometimes it's hard to get up when it's dark and cold. But, sometimes it's easier to get up when it's dark and cold if you're going to look into the light of God's countenance, if you have your heart warmed by the presence of God. I remember making it out of bed early on this cold dark winter morning, and I was reading the Septuagint of Exodus devotionally. I remember that as I was reading, all of a sudden Exodus 4:19 just leapt off the page. The phrase that leapt out to me was this phrase when God spoke to Moses:

“Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”

It struck me that that is a verbatim quote in Matthew: *Those who sought the Child's life are dead*. Matthew presents this as the work of Herod, and yet he quotes this phrase in the plural, as a quotation. Matthew is wanting us to see the connection between the first and the last, between the first redeemer and the last Redeemer, between the first Exodus and the second Exodus led by Jesus Christ. The mission of God in fulfillment has arrived in Jesus Christ. You may

wonder: "Does Matthew really want us to see this? Does he really want us to see Jesus as the new Moses leading a second Exodus, leading us out from sin, the cause of the exile?" I think he really does, and I think this has serious implications for us.

The Gospel of Matthew is not an expansive work. It's devoid of decoration; it's the opposite of a flowery Victorian novel from which numerous details can be stricken without loss. You know those romance novels that you see in the checkout aisle or sometimes at the public library? They are placed in a prominent spot just coaxing people to read something. Huge sections of these works can be omitted without loss. Matthew, however, has a very different agenda. Every phrase is meaningful. Matthew's meaning is in its allusion, in its quotation of the Scriptures. Matthew is very different from Shakespeare or Coleridge, who had a great fondness for coining new words. Shakespeare had new ideas to convey. He wanted to convey things for which there were no words, so he just invented words. Two thousand English words were invented by Shakespeare, words and phrases like *bubble*, like *seen better days*, *strange bedfellows*, *sorry sight*, *full circle*. Shakespeare just generated language, and we live in a society that is intoxicated with innovation. That's why we need Matthew as our first Gospel, because Matthew is not intoxicated with innovation. Matthew has the great story of the world coursing through his veins, and it is told in the Scriptures. We will miss the first presentation of who Jesus Christ is if we cut Him off from this great first-telling of the story. Matthew's Gospel in the end reads like a chapter in a large book. Scripture quotations for Matthew are anything but ornamentation. They direct the reader back. Matthew's whole Gospel has in it, as it were, hyperlinks in every phrase to be opened up to the reader to see the connection between the Testaments. Michael Golberg says:

"The narrative of Matthew presupposes the narrative of the Hebrew Bible and a thorough knowledge of it."

I think it's really true that as the first redeemer was, so the latter Redeemer shall be.

Let me apply this to us:

The first application is that **Jesus Christ is the keynote to the entire symphony of Scripture**. My family had the privilege this weekend of hearing Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*. It was awesome, and it became significantly more awesome when the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra conductor, Louis Langrée, explained what was so awesome about the Symphony before we heard it. He said the opening chord started the minor key, and there is pain and sorrow in the narrative, and then, at the end, it just bursts into joy. He said it took Tchaikovsky one hundred and two pages to go from that to this. After he said that in the prelude video, I was ready. I thought, "Bring it on. I can't wait to hear how you make it from that to this." God is kind to us in telling the story of His beloved Son, to set Christ off on this template of redemption. It means

that Jesus is the keynote of the Symphony of Scripture. It means though, more practically perhaps for each one of us, that this world is meaningful, not random, not chaotic. It means that this life, that the events of this world, my next appointment, and your activity this evening, are meaningful. We live in a society that is desperate for meaning but is looking for it in the wrong places. It's not in plastic things that light up; it's not in things that take batteries; it's not in things that require no batteries. The meaning is to be found in the keynote of the Symphony in Jesus Christ. This season of the year becomes significant only when it's in relation to the keynote of the grand Symphony of Scripture that the Lord God Almighty has written.

The second application is **the challenge to know God's story so well that we see Jesus clearly.** This is an indictment for people who are running around in such a hurry that they often miss seeing Jesus as the second Moses. If you know God's story well, then what Matthew was describing will start ringing in your ears. Our deafness to the allusions in Scripture sometimes comes because we have too much else that we're listening to.

In my family, as we were growing up, we used to play game at Christmas time called *Tuned In*. It was one of those games that was a hilarious, great holiday game. The basis of the game was that everyone gets a kazoo, and when you spin the wheel, you get five, four, three, two, or one notes to play a song on your kazoo. Your partner, then, has to guess the song based on your virtuosity on the kazoo. It's amazing how people can pick up a song with two notes. It's not because they are musicologists or they have PhDs in music theory. It is because they have listened over and over, and the tune is inside them.

When the Scripture is inside you, and you hear Matthew speaking of a genealogy, of 400 years of slavery coming to an end, of the birth of a Redeemer, a Child, of a worldly power seeking to

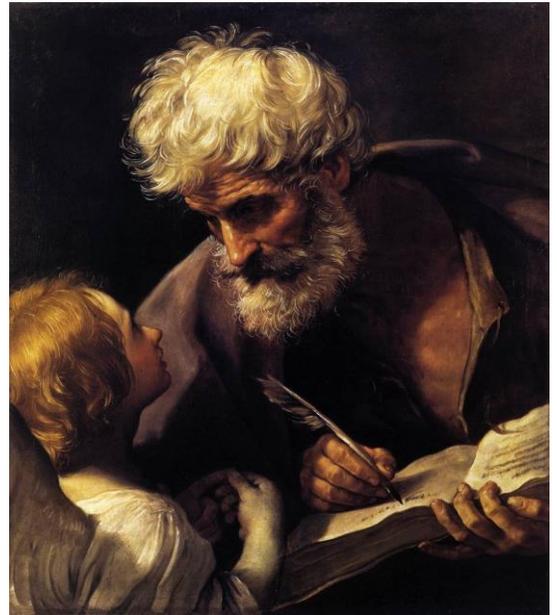


slaughter the male children, of the last gasp of self-preservation, of God's sovereignly protecting a Savior's birth and when you hear Matthew speaking of a voice in the wilderness beckoning to prepare the highway, the second Exodus highway; and when you see Jesus passing through the waters, that Paul likens to the Red Sea, and proceeding out into the wilderness for 40

days like Moses and then climbing up to a mountain to proclaim the Word of God; and when you have the Scripture coursing through your veins, you see it. You see that Jesus carries our story upon His own shoulders, retracing our very steps, and that we do not have a Savior who is ignorant of our circumstances, but One who walks our steps and then goes out in front of us, as we will see. He walks out in front of us toward the cross where He accomplishes His Exodus

leading us out from the slavery of sin. From there, in resurrected glory, He will turn around and invite us to follow Him. Jesus is the keynote. We need Scripture saturation to be who we are called to be, to offer to a world desperate for hope, the very real hope. This is the Sunday of hope, and hope is not just an idea; hope is not just a wish; hope is not just an anonymous prayer that somehow, someday, things will get better. Hope is a Person, Jesus Christ who came in fulfillment of all that God has promised.

Guido Reni painted of portrait of Matthew at work in composing his Gospel. There is an angel in his painting just guiding Matthew's words. Every phrase is meaningful. We often miss it, but it's there.



I want to leave you with a reflection of a Syrian Christian. Syria is much in the news much these days with lots of suffering and sorrow. But did you know that there were generations and generations and generations of people that love Jesus Christ from that part of the world? One of them, Aphrahat, said this when he read Matthew. He saw the connection, and he said:

“Moses also was persecuted, as Jesus was persecuted. When Moses was born, they concealed him that he might not be slain by his persecutors. When Jesus was born they carried Him off in flight into Egypt that Herod, His persecutor, might not slay Him. In the days when Moses was born, children used to be drowned in the river; and at the birth of Jesus the children of Bethlehem and in its border were slain. To Moses God said: ‘The men are dead who were seeking your life’; and to Joseph the angel said in Egypt: ‘Arise, take up the child, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead who were seeking the life of the child to take it away.’ Moses brought out his people from the service of Pharaoh; and Jesus delivered all nations from the service of Satan and sin.”

He is our hope. This is the wonder of Jesus. Here lies the hope of the world! Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we bow our hearts to You this morning. Father, we take delight in how You have highlighted for us the real identity of Your beloved Son, the Leader of the second Exodus, the Prophet who was to come, the Son of the Most High. Lord Jesus, we place our hope in You this morning, and rightly so. We thank You that You are the keynote of the Symphony of Scripture. We thank You that You are not a Savior who saves from a distance, but that You have come down, retracing our steps, bearing our story on Your shoulders, and dying for our sins. We worship You this morning. We ask Your forgiveness, Lord, where we have misplaced our hopes,

where we have failed to hear this stirring melody that You have written, this compelling picture that You have painted for us of Jesus the hope of the world. Lord, we trust in You afresh this morning, and we glorify You, and You alone.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.