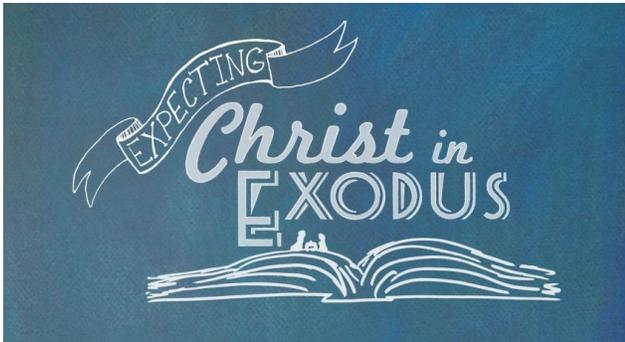


Expecting Christ in Exodus
The LORD Will Perform Mighty Deeds with His Arm

Advent 2014 Sermon Series
Exodus 3:1-15; Luke 1:46-55
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
December 7, 2014

TEXTS: Exodus 3:1-15; Luke 1:46-55

We continue this morning in our Advent series *Expecting Christ in Exodus*. This is the time of year when we focus our attention on the coming of Christ, the Savior of the world. Over these



few weeks together, we are going to explore how the Lord prepares our hearts to see Christ from the Book of Exodus. Jesus said a staggering thing to His disciples on the road to Emmaus. He said that all of the Scripture is fundamentally about Him, so, we should expect to find the life of Christ in every portion of God's Word, and in the book of Exodus this Advent season. My

prayer is that we would see Christ through the eyes of those who first saw Him, and that our hearts would be set on fire as theirs were to share Him with the world around them. Last Sunday, we looked at the first portrait of Jesus in the New Testament, the portrait drawn by Matthew who drew a profound correspondence between Moses and Jesus as the new Moses, or second Moses, promised in Scripture. We noted that in rabbinic literature many passages contain the refrain: "As the first redeemer was, so shall the latter Redeemer be."

As we turn our attention to the Gospel of Luke, we see in Luke another portrait of the coming

of Christ. Many of us feel great sympathy and affection for Luke. For many of us, it is our favorite Gospel. Luke is the only Gentile author in the New Testament, and Luke makes a journey that we make as well to discover that the greatest Person who ever lived, the most important news that is ever to be announced, happened in a corner of the



world that some of us care little about. It is a journey to significance, and it is a significance that

is found in the birth of Christ, not only in His birth, but in His public ministry, in His dying, and in His rising again. We want to look at two texts that may seem to you as totally unrelated, and yet these texts share the same story; they share the same vocabulary and many close verbal connections. Most importantly of all, however, Exodus 3 and Luke 1 share the same vision of the Person of God. We see the same God at work in Exodus 3 who is at work in Luke 1:46. We see this God at work, a God that we learn performed mighty deeds with His outstretched arm. I want us to look first at Exodus and see the Person of God there revealed, and then we will look at Mary's song and see that Mary's song echoes many of these same ideas. Her song praises God and anticipates the public ministry of her Son who will give His life as a ransom for you and for me.

Let's look first at God's mighty arm extended to save, God's mighty deeds with His arm in Exodus. In the ground we covered this fall in Exodus 3, we saw that God appeared to Moses. He appeared in the image of a flaming bush, and in his glorious coming to Moses, He identifies Himself immediately in Exodus 3:6 when He says:

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

At this, Moses hid his face to look at the Person of God. It is crucial that we remember that God is the God of our forefathers, that God is the God of the generations, that He is unchanging in His character. He is not for us one day and against us the next. He identifies Himself to Moses as the God of his ancestors. He appears in glory and then reveals to Moses who He is and what He is like. In Exodus 3:7, the Lord says:

"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."

The God of the Bible is living. He is alive; He sees; He hears; and He responds. He is unlike the gods of the nations, the gods we make up for ourselves, gods that cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot act. Yet, this God, the true God, He hears and He sees. Not only does He hear and see, but He responds. God has seen the situation of His people and heard their prayers, so, as a result, God responds in Exodus 3:8, and this is amazing. He says:

"So I have come down to rescue them . . ."

This statement is to be an incarnation of the Old Testament. God says: "I will come down Myself to save." The God of glory comes down to pick you up. Isn't that breath-taking? How will He do that? How will God come down to pick us up? He will do that with His outstretched arm. God will come down, and He will pick us up. The outstretched arm of God is an image that we first encounter in the Bible in Exodus. It is an image that the Bible just can't shake; it is so powerful. Those who were here this fall may remember the images of Pharaoh and his war

chariot just crushing the skulls of his enemies, and Pharaoh in his chariot with his arm stretched out and hieroglyphs above his chariot saying: "He who has outstretched arm." But, the real arm of power in the universe belongs to no man. The real arm of power in the universe belongs to the living God, and He comes down, and He takes hold of us and lifts us up. In Exodus 6:1, when God tells Moses more of what He will do, He says:

"Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of My mighty hand he will let them go; because of My mighty hand [outstretched hand] he will drive them out of his country."

The Lord promises in Exodus 6:6:

"I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."

Whatever your situation is right now, God's arm is not too short to lift you up; His arm is not too short to save. It's not an impotent arm; it's not a weak arm. It's a very powerful arm; it's a saving arm, and God reaches out to us to save. Isn't it wonderful that God does not look down at us in our sin, in our misery, in our oppression, and say, "Good luck to you all"? There is no Gospel in that; there is no forgiveness in that; there is no rescue in that. Can you imagine being bound, kidnapped, held hostage, and the person with power to help you to just sends you a text with instructions on how to free yourself? What a disappointment that would be! But what if the one with the power to rescue actually burst down the door of your captors, freed you, and took you by the hand when your only fear was: "Do I have the strength left just to hold on to the saving arm of my rescuer?" That is all that God really asks of us. God reaches out His mighty hand, His outstretched arm, to save. When God comes to save, it flips the world upside down. God says in Exodus 3:9-10:

"And now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt."

There is a great reversal, this overturning of reality, As it turns out, the slave people, with no rights, working for no compensation, turn out to be lifted up and seated with the king. The most powerful man in the world at that time, with the most sophisticated weapons, with gold everywhere, turns out to be at the bottom. When God comes, He reaches out to save, and He overturns the power structures of the world and brings redemption to His people. God turns the world upside down, and He does this and acts in this way because of an ancient promise that He has made. God says in Exodus 6:5:

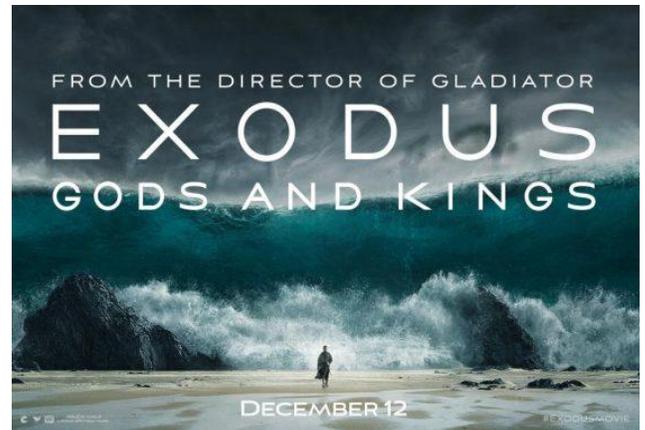
"I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered My covenant."

Remembering, on the part of God, is not God forgetting and then thinking: “Oh yeah, I made this promise.” God's remembering in the Bible is an act of covenant faithfulness: “I will remember you; I will never forget you.” God says He has made a promise that He will carry out and bring to fulfillment. The Lord says to Moses in Exodus 3:15:

“Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.”

So Exodus 3 gives us this compelling picture of God: a God who responds; a God who comes down to save; a God who saves with His mighty outstretched arm; a God who overturns the power structures of this world, and does so in remembrance of His covenant promise. I can assure you that there is no other God like this. You will never find another like the God of the Bible.

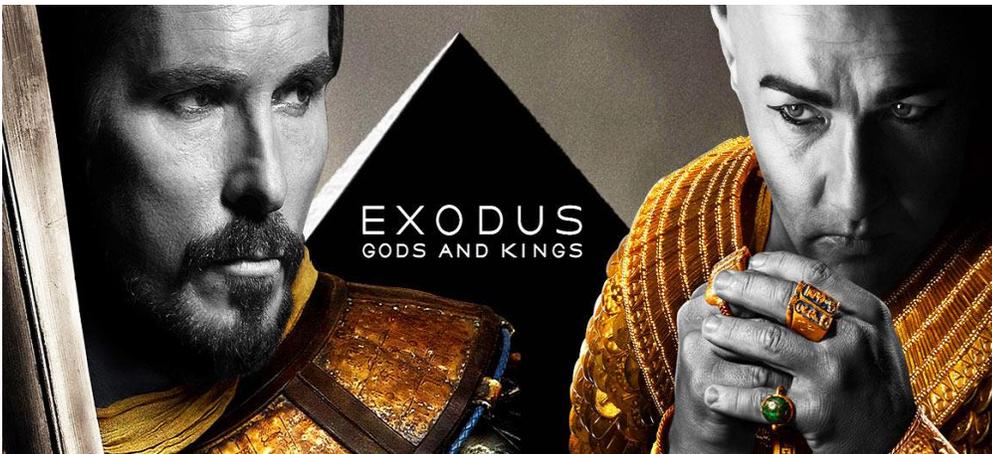
There have been many movies made about events in the Bible, especially events in Exodus, and although we may not always agree with the content of these movies, they often provide us with great conversation starters. The current film by Ridley Scott, *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, misses, first of all, the main character of the Exodus: the Lord God Almighty Himself.



Secondly, it is not a story about fraternal conflict; it's not a story about brothers in conflict with each other, but the story of a loving, powerful God who remembers His people and saves them with His powerful, outstretched arm. One way to respond to questions about movies like this is to ask if the

person has read the actual story of the Exodus. God's Word has something much greater to tell us than of a conflict between siblings. God's Word has something much greater to tell us than

an oversaturation of violence.



The war in Exodus was not a war between brothers; it's a war between God and one who would claim to be God.

The missing character of the film is not missing from the Gospel of Luke. When we turn to Luke 1:46, we find that Mary's song of praise to God is saturated with God, and praise to God, and celebration of God, and specifying the rationale and the reasons of the motivation for her praise to God. Mary, in her own song, is a very small figure; God is a great figure, and she extols the praise of God. One of the most remarkable features about Mary's song of praise to God in Luke 1:46 is that it is saturated with Exodus imagery. Let's look at it together. Mary says:

"My soul glorifies the Lord. . ."

It is literally: "My soul magnifies the Lord," The Latin translation of Luke 1:46 is *magnificat*, and that is why this is sometimes called *The Magnificat*. It's a song, not about Mary; it's a song about the Lord; it's about Mary's praising God and rejoicing in God. Why? For the same reasons that we see God revealed in glory in Exodus 3. Just as in Exodus 3, God sees, hears, and is concerned about the affliction of His people. So in Mary's song, God is praised and great because He has been mindful of the humble state, the humiliation, of His servant, and He saw it. He sees the affliction, the suffering. He sees the 400 years of waiting from the close of the Old Testament to this moment in Mary's life. Not only does He see and hear and is mindful and is concerned, but just as in Exodus, He actually comes down to save. Mary says in Luke 1:48:

"From now on all generations will call me blessed."

They would call her blessed, but not because of anything intrinsic in her. It is actually the same line that Leah says in Genesis 30:13: "women will call me blessed." Leah is not painted in big murals, nor does she have the status that Mary does, but Mary is a first-century young Jewish woman to whom God came and gave this incredible promise of fulfillment. God would use her, and God revealed to her that He did not come from a distance, but that He would come Himself. All generations will call her blessed. Why? Because the mighty One, the Lord God Almighty, has done wondrous things. The wondrous thing that God has done is to come in the Person of His Son. "You will bear a son," we learned last week, "and name Him Jesus, for He will save the people from their sin."

Just as in Exodus, God will save through mighty deeds and an outstretched arm. Mary says the same thing in Luke 1:51:

"He has performed mighty deeds with His arm."

It was a moment of exegetical euphoria for me this week when I checked every passage in Scripture of the mighty outstretched arm. It first occurs in the Exodus. One hundred thirty passages in the Old Testament refer to God's saving outstretched arm, all building on that template of redemption. Three passages in the New Testament refer to God's outstretched saving arm, and two of those three are a direct quote of Old Testament Exodus passages. The last one is this one. This is an Exodus allusion of God's saving outstretched arm. Just as in the

Exodus, God's saving action turns the world upside down, so it is with the coming of Jesus. He turns the world upside down, and Mary knows it. She says in Luke 1:51:

"He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts."

The proud look down on others because they don't look up to God. So in the Bible, the proud are consistently depicted as God's enemies. He scattered the proud, and he has brought down rulers from their thrones. He has lifted up the humble; He has filled the hungry with good things. Remember Jesus' opening lines of the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. The ministry of Christ turns the world upside down. He has filled the hungry; He sent the rich away empty, which isn't so much a statement about wealth or godly people who are wealthy and use their wealth for the Kingdom of God, but the image here is those hungry and thirsting being satisfied, and those who are satiated with this world's pleasures miss God's Kingdom, and they are unsatisfied by Christ.

Eugene Peterson, in his translation *The Message*, renders a section of what Mary said in Luke 1:46-55 like this:

"What God has done for me will never be forgotten, the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others. His mercy flows in wave after wave on those who are in awe before Him. He bared His arm and showed His strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet, the callous rich were left out in the cold."

The world is turned upside down. Just as in the Exodus, God's saving actions are in remembrance of His covenant promise, so, too, in Mary's song. "He has helped," she sings, "His servant, or His child, Israel, by remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as He said to our fathers." God's coming in Christ is in fulfillment of a Covenant promise. The verb in the Luke 1:54, *He has helped*, is the same language that is used for *to take by the hand*. He reached out His mighty hand, and He has taken us. It is an allusion to Jeremiah 31:32, where it says that God will reach out His hand and take us into covenant with Himself, into relationship.

There are many great features about Mary's song. One of the most remarkable is that she praises God for all of these things that will happen through the ministry of her Son, while He is still in the womb. Her song looks forward to all of Jesus' public ministry, and Jesus' public ministry will fulfill all these things. Jesus will stand one day, a few years from this time, in the synagogue, and the scroll of Isaiah will be handed to Him. He will read in Luke 4:18-19:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the

poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then Jesus says the most remarkable thing in Luke 4:21:

"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

God has come down to save; He has heard; He has performed mighty deeds with His outstretched arm. Luke takes great space in his Gospel to narrate Jesus' mighty deeds, healings, casting out of demons, signs, and wonders. The crowds respond to Jesus in Luke 4:26:

"We have seen remarkable things today."

This was just like what the magicians said to Pharaoh about the signs and wonders done by Moses. They said: "This is the finger of God acting." Jesus echoes this language in Luke 11:20 when He says:

"But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you."

The people spoke of Jesus that He was mighty indeed, that He worked signs, and you see Jesus' public ministry of signs, the language of signs publicly, is an Exodus theme.

Early Christian writers saw this. The *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* say this:

"As Moses did signs and miracles, so also did Jesus. And there is no doubt but that the likeness of the signs proves Jesus to be that Prophet of whom Moses said that he should come 'like myself.'"

Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in his *Demonstration of the Gospel*:

"Moses by wonderful works and miracles authenticated the religion that he proclaimed; Christ likewise, using His recorded miracles to inspire faith in those who saw them established the gospel teaching."

Jesus' public ministry turned the world upside down. We read in Luke 6:20-21:

*"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh."*

And in Luke 6:24-25:

*"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.
Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."*

Jesus continues in Luke 14:11 by saying:

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

When Jesus performed the works, like feeding the people in the wilderness, the people who saw that with their own eyes, their conclusion to that moment was to say: “Surely the Prophet like Moses has arrived.” That’s what they said who saw it.

COMMUNION:

Jesus, after His public ministry and preparing to head toward the cross, began to teach His disciples that He must suffer and die for their redemption. As He began to explain this to them, He withdrew and took just a few of His closest disciples. They went up to a mountain, and Jesus is transfigured before them, His face, shining like Moses’ after meeting with God. Then, in a remarkable scene, Moses and Elijah join the conversation. This would have been one of those moments in the Bible to lean forward and listen. Luke tells us what they were talking about, and it is beautiful. Luke 9:30-31 tells us:

“And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Luke says literally in the Greek text that they were speaking about Jesus’ exodus. They were speaking about the exodus that Jesus was about to lead, the exodus of Jesus which He was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.

Jesus’ exodus leads to an upper room celebration of Passover. Jesus said to His disciples: “I long to celebrate this with you.” You see, this is a Covenant meal in remembrance of those promises made long ago. Jesus came to His disciples, and He took the imagery of the Passover meal, the Exodus celebration. He took bread in their presence, and He broke it and said: “This is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” He took the cup and spoke a line which must have thrilled His disciples: “This cup is the cup of the New Covenant. This is the fulfillment of all that God had promised, and is the New Covenant in My blood.”

This morning, the consistency of God is before us. The Lord says: *“I am the Lord. I do not change.”* Wherever you need His outstretched saving mighty arm, it is not too short to reach you where you need it this morning. Just lean onto His saving, powerful, almighty arm. He is reaching out to you; just take hold of Him and His saving actions on our behalf.

Amen.