

"WALK THRU THE BIBLE: EXODUS."

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

May 19, 2024, 6:00 pm

Text for Sermon: Exodus 3:1-12

Introduction:

Exodus is an incredible book, an epic tale of the grandest proportions. It contains some of the most famous stories in literature, the enslavement of the children of Israel by Pharaoh in Egypt, the rescue of baby Moses, the call of God to Moses out of a burning bush, the ten plagues, the Passover, the exodus of God's people, the crossing of the Red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh's army, the wilderness wanderings with manna and water out of a rock, Mt. Sinai, the golden calf, the Ten Commandments, the building of the tabernacle.

Perhaps most importantly we are shown the birth and founding of the nation of Israel, one of the world's oldest and most consequential people, who still are central in the world scene. From this birth we learn the moral meaning of community life, the nature of political leadership and the standards for judging right and wrong and what makes a social order better or worse (LK).

Here we see God's ways for human life and thriving, as opposed to the ways of Egypt, Mesopotamia or Canaan, a way devoted to decency and dignity, righteousness and holiness (LK).

Above all else, preeminently, Exodus is about God. God is the central and decisive character. God delivers His people, leads them, guides them, feeds them, forms a covenant with them, gives them their laws, has a special relationship with Moses, and creates a place for Himself to dwell among them. Most of all God reveals Himself, YHWH, I am who I am.

To read Exodus is to encounter God, as Moses did at the burning bush.

Exodus is one of the deepest sources for the *nature of God* in all of Scripture. In Exodus God reveals His true identity. At the burning bush God reveals Himself to be utterly holy (3:5), self-sufficient and sufficient to save (3:14), perfectly faithful (6:4), superior over the ten gods whom He humiliates in ten plagues (7-12), severe in justice (10:2), and abounding in compassion (34:6-7).

In Exodus 3:14-15 God reveals to Moses his personal, proper name, YHWH. The Israelites already knew this name, but they didn't yet know what it meant.

In Exodus we come face to face with the promise keeping God who fulfills His promises (1:1-7). His people have been fruitful and multiplied; He has made Abraham into a great nation.

And the rest of Exodus is a great ringing record of God keeping promise after promise (e.g., 2:23–25; 3:7–10; 3:12; 6:4; 12:40–41; 13:19).

Remember the promise God made in Genesis 3:15, the seed of women will crush the head of the serpent? That promise is already being fulfilled in Exodus.

For a few thousand years, the battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman raged. Many people died, nations rose and fell. And the serpent and his seed watched the woman's seed become a great and numerous people in Egypt. Despite his best efforts, there were more of them than ever. It is time for drastic action.

The serpent moves Pharaoh to destroy the woman's seed. All the infant boys are to be killed. But the plan fails, not just once but three times and every time at the hands of women.

Moses' mother forfeits her life by hiding Moses in a basket and placing him in the river. Pharaoh's daughter openly defies orders by rescuing Moses out of the river and making him her own.

The Egyptian midwives stymie Pharaoh's plan through simple noncompliance, covered up by lies.

Women stop the seed of the serpent, and they did it not by becoming men, but by embracing their own nature to bear and nurture and protect children. Women are central in God's plan to redeem the world. The seed of women crushing the head of the serpent (John Moody).

Exodus is the living Word of God, breathed out by the Holy Spirit and written down for our spiritual benefit. Exodus takes up God's Story where Genesis left off. It begins 400 years after the death of Joseph with Israel in the bondage of slavery in Egypt.

Genesis recounts the creation of the world, Exodus tells the creation of a nation. Whereas Genesis covers 24-plus generations, Exodus concerns only the first 80 years of the life of Moses, whom God raised up to be the deliverer of His people out of Egypt.

The word exodus means exodus, exit, departure. It can be summed up in three great themes.

The first part of Exodus is simply narrative (Ex. 1-19), showing God's great act of delivering His people from bondage in Egypt through great signs and wonders.

Then God brings them to Mt. Sinai where He makes a covenant with them and gives them His Law, first in the Ten Commandments, then in a bunch of Laws which amplify the Ten Commandments (20-24).

Finally, the last part of the book concerns the building of the tabernacle (25-31). God gives instructions to build His tabernacle so He can dwell with them and be near them.

Woven throughout the whole thing we find the grumbling and disobedience of Israel.

Let me summarize these three great themes in Exodus, God delivered them, God instructs them, and God accompanies them.

Redemption.

The exodus of God's people is the definitive model of redemption in the whole Old Testament. In fact, God's entire plan of salvation in Scripture is exodus-shaped. Exodus is the Gospel in the OT, God's first great act of redemption. The exodus is to the OT people what the cross is to the NT people. It is the greatest redemptive event in the OT and in all of history until the cross.

Exodus 20:2-3 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

Their identity is fixed as a rescued and redeemed people by a Redeemer God. They are bought with a price. God memorializes the exodus redemption in the Passover. When God rescued his people at the cost of precisely one lamb per household (Exodus 12:1–13).

A spotless lamb, shed blood, saved not by personal worthiness, but by the blood. This is substitutionary atonement when the blood of a lamb saves the people.

In the midst of the story of the exodus, God instructs Moses and Aaron to establish the month of the exodus as the first month of Israel's calendar and to celebrate the Passover every year within it, memorializing the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12). The memorialization of the exodus in the yearly Passover celebration grounds Israel and its self-understanding in that great deliverance (Alastair J. Roberts).

So Jesus memorializes His great redemption of His people in the Lord's Supper. We forever are to remember we are a rescued and redeemed people, saved and delivered from slavery with a great price.

The giving of the Law.

It is hard to summarize the importance of God's giving His people His Law. The Law set Israel apart as a holy nation.

The Law reveals the holiness, righteousness, and moral perfection of God. It is a reflection of God's character and serves as a standard for human behavior. By giving the Law, God shows what He values and what is required for living a life that is pleasing to Him.

The Law was given within the context of the covenant between God and Israel. It established the terms of the relationship, outlining how Israel was to live as God's chosen people. The Law

was not just a set of rules but a means through which Israel could maintain fellowship with God. It underscored the concept of a holy community set apart for God's purposes.

The Law includes ceremonial and sacrificial regulations that were shadows that pointed forward to Christ who perfectly fulfilled all of them.

The civil aspects of the Law provided guidelines for justice, social order, and ethical behavior in society. These principles reflect God's concern for justice and care for the vulnerable.

The tabernacle.

But that is not all! God reveals He will be a King who is near to His people, dwelling in their very midst, inviting them into intimate communion with Himself in an *earthly tabernacle*.

Exodus 29:45-46 I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. 46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

The tabernacle points to Jesus with its altar of sacrifice (atonement, cross), basin for washing away sin (baptism), table of the Bread of Presence (bread of life, communion), the lampstand (light of the world), and altar of incense (prayers of the saints).

Exodus concludes with the glory of God coming down and filling the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34-38 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

So the glory of God fills the book as it does the Bible, as it does the whole earth, as the waters cover the sea. From beginning to end the exodus was for the glory of God.

Jesus in Exodus:

I Corinthians 10:1-3 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

Exodus themes are prominent throughout the ministry of Christ. The life of Christ follows closely the life of Moses. Born a savior, Christ is the son called out of Egypt. He

is the boy child rescued from the murderous king. He is the man who passes through the waters of baptism and spends a period of forty days being tested in the wilderness. He returned and went up to authoritatively teach a new 'law' from a mountain (Matt 5-7). He is the manifestation of the Father's glory that eclipses the glory of the Mosaic revelation received at Sinai.

Christ's death and resurrection occur in the context of Passover. Christ is the Passover Lamb, the firstborn Son, the prophet like Moses. Christ is our Passover in that he has guaranteed that the angel of wrath, the destruction of holy judgment, passes over us because Christ has borne our place (SS).

Pentecost is like Sinai, the giving of the Spirit like the giving of the Law. In both cases, the leader of the people ascends to God's presence then gives a new revelation and establishes a new dwelling of God with his people.

Personal application.

We are to perceive the ways in which the story of Israel resonates with our own. We have been delivered from the dominion of the Pharaoh of this world, Satan. We are pilgrims in the wilderness of this present age, being led to the Promised Land of the new heavens and the new earth by the Spirit. We are being led by Christ, the prophet like Moses and the true Joshua. We face the temptation of returning to Egypt, and are tested in a great many ways, yet are called to follow our Master, who has overcome the ruler of this age.

When we read the story of the exodus, we are not just reading about some events that occurred in the distant past, but are seeing patterns of divine redemption that are still being worked out in the world today (Alastair J. Roberts).

By reading Exodus we understand where we came from as the people of God – especially the theology surrounding our redemption and freedom from the bondage of sin by blood and by power.

We learn to trust God in difficult times since He acts in response to our prayers and out of His compassion and love – but according to His timing and in His own way and for His glory. We grow in our confidence in God's faithfulness as we see how He keeps his promises to His people.

Exodus shows us that God does unspeakably great and glorious things for us. God is the God who sovereignly and supremely reaches down and rescues His people, saves them from sin and bondage and death. Because God has done this, He has a claim on us and makes a covenant with us and calls us to stay out of bondage through holiness (more about this in the next book).

Nothing or no one can keep us from God's sovereign, good purpose. Nothing can hinder God's plan, nothing can thwart God's deliverance and salvation.

The exodus Psalm, Psalm 106:

Psalm 106:47-48 Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.

48 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!

And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord!