

Exodus: The Pattern of God's Salvation

By: Chad Knudson

The importance of the Exodus event in the Old Testament cannot be underestimated. There are over 120 explicit Old Testament references to the Exodus in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Its significance is even recognized by those outside the Christian community with the production of live action and animated movies. While those outside Christian communities may recognize the Exodus event as significant because of its inspiring story or grand scale, the Scriptures reveal that the Exodus is a momentous event because it becomes a pattern of God's salvation for his people. For many Christians the Exodus is confined to Moses parting the Red Sea, but within the storyline of Scripture the Exodus becomes a pattern of God's redemption that finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The Exodus

The Exodus is first mentioned when God covenants with Abraham (Gen 15:7-21). God foretells of a time when his descendants will be enslaved, but later freed. The passing of God (represented by fire and a cloud) between the split animals may signify a foretaste to the actual Exodus event, but the greater point should not be missed. The Exodus is an event planned by God long before it even happened.

Just as God announced to Abraham, the children of Israel were enslaved by Pharaoh for four-hundred years. God brings deliverance to them through his servant Moses. This "good" child not only becomes the great deliverer of Israel, but is part of God's new work to create a people for himself (Exo 2:2; Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). With ten plagues on Egypt God brings eventual deliverance for his people and they leave Egypt with freedom and wealth (Exo 3:22; 12:35-36). Upon crossing the Red Sea Moses and the children of Israel sing a song of thanksgiving, recounting God's lovingkindness, deliverance, and covenantal faithfulness (Exo 15:1-18). God reminds the people that he has delivered them on eagles wings to make them his own possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. They were to obey and keep his covenant (Exo 19:3-6; Deut 7:6; 10:15). God continues to provide for the people in the wilderness despite their idolatry and immorality. Before entering the land, Moses foretells how God will scatter his people among the nations (Deut 30:1-10). Despite scattering his people for their sin, God will bring them back, just like he delivered them from Egypt. The Exodus event will become a central theme in the history of Israel, which will serve as a reminder of God's salvation for his people. The importance of the Exodus in the life of Israel cannot be missed as it is the singular greatest event in its history that is recounted in their law, worship, psalms, prayers, and festivals (Exo 12:2, 26-27; 22:21; 23:10-12, 14; Lev 11:45; 19:33-34; 23:42-43; 25:42-43; Deut 5:14-15; 10:17-19; 15:13-15; 16:9-12; 23:7; 24:17-22; Josh 24:1ff; Judg 2:11-13; 1 Sam 12:6-8; 2 Sam 7:23; 1 Kings 8:1ff; Psa 66:1ff; 78:1ff, 105:1ff; 114:1ff; Jer 32:16-21; Dan 9:4-19).

The Prophets

In the prophetic literature the Exodus motif is recalled repeatedly to speak about God's deliverance in light of impending judgment and exile. Hosea likens Israel's destruction at the hands of the Assyrians to their bondage in Egypt (Hos 9:1-3). Despite bondage and destruction, God promises to make Israel his people again (Hos 1:9-11; 2:21-23). God will bring his people back like he brought them out of bondage in Egypt (Hos 11:1, 10-11). He will woo her in the desert and make Achor a door of hope rather than a place of destruction (Hos 2:14-15). Much like Hosea, other prophets chronicle Israel's unfaithfulness and God's future restoration. The motif used to describe this future deliverance is the Exodus event (Amos 2:6-16; 3:1-2; 9:7-8, 14-15; Micah 4:6-7; 5:3; 6:4; Habb 3:2-15). This future Exodus will be so great that the people will praise the Lord not for his past deliverance, but for this new deliverance in which he will gather his people, write his law on their hearts, and make a new covenant with Israel (Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 31:7-11; 31:34). Much like he delivered the Israelites in the past, God will cleanse the people and dwell with them. These promises recall God's word to the Israelites after their Exodus from Egypt (Ezek 11:19-20; 20:33-38; 36:33-36; 37:1-14; 40-48).

Perhaps the greatest picture of a future Exodus is found in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah prophesies of God leading his people back from exile and gathering them from among the nations (Isa 11:11-16; 40:1-11). Just as God delivered his people before, he will deliver them again and provide for and protect them (Isa 41:14; 42:16-21, 24; 43:2, 16-21; 44:22-23; 48:20-21; 49:10-13, 24-25; 52:11-12). Just as Moses and the children of Israel sang a song of thanksgiving, so those who will be delivered in the future will praise God for his salvation (Isa 42:10-12; 44:23). God's agent of deliverance is his chosen servant who will have the Spirit like Moses and bring salvation to God's people (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 51:9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3; cf. Exo 6:6). This new redeemed people will all have the Spirit of God and they will become a kingdom of priests (Isa 44:3; Isa 56:6-8; 61:6; 66:21; cf., Exo 19:3-6; Num 11:24-29). Just as assuredly as God delivered Israel once before on eagles wings, so again he will perform another and even better Exodus for those who wait upon him (Isa 40:31).

The Exile

After seventy years of Babylonian exile God fulfills his promise to bring the children of Israel back to the land (Jer 29:10; Dan 9:2). God leads his people out of Babylonian captivity under the leadership of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. Just like Moses had led Israel out of Egyptian captivity, so Ezra stands as a second Moses leading Israel out of captivity. Like Moses, Ezra brings the people back to the land, gives them the law, and helps begin construction on a dwelling place for God (Ezra 1:5-11; 3:1-13; 6:13-18; Neh 8:1-9:37). The people celebrate the Feast of Booths, a festival to commemorate God's protection and provision in the wilderness after the Exodus, but now their celebration is in response to God's protection and provision for them while they wandered in another wilderness—Babylon. Just as God delivered the children of Israel under Moses' leadership, provided for them in the wilderness, and brought them safely into the land, so God had done the same for the people under Ezra. With the promise of restoration still on their minds, the Israelites recognized that this second Exodus did not fulfill all the promises God made through the prophets (Ezra 3:12-13; Hagg 2:3). The prophets Haggai,

Zechariah, and Malachi remind the people that God will surely restore their fortunes and bring them deliverance from all their enemies (Zech 12:1-9; 14:1-8). God will build a house for himself and dwell with his people (Hagg 2:1ff). He will make one servant to rule over them as a priest and king and he will make all things holy, including his people by giving them his Spirit (Zech 12:10-14; 14:9-21). Just as assuredly as the Israelites celebrated the Feast of Booths for God's provision between their Exodus and entry into the Promised Land, so this future eschatological community will do the same, remembering God's final deliverance, protection, and restoration (Zech 14:16-19). With the promise of a final and better Exodus yet to come, God will send his chosen prophet who will come to clear his path and prepare the people for their final deliverance and restoration (Isa 40:1-3; Mal 3:1; 4:4-6).

The New Exodus

The New Testament begins with strong allusions to the Exodus, pointing to the fact that Jesus brings about the final Exodus foretold in the Old Testament.¹ In Matthew 2:13-15 the author records the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt to escape King Herod. Matthew uses this opportunity in the narrative to disclose that Jesus is his son called out of Egypt, like Israel was called out of Egypt. Quoting from Hosea 11:1, Matthew applies the Old Testament text to Jesus; thus, concluding that Jesus is the true son or the true Israel (Exo 4:22-23). Jesus as the true son or true Israel will then recapitulate the life of Israel from bondage, to Exodus, to temptation in the wilderness, to conquering the land in his own life, which is fully disclosed in Matthew chapter three and following. In Matthew 3:13-17 Jesus is baptized, which recalls passing through the water by the Israelites. Jesus is immediately driven into the wilderness to face temptation for forty days, just as Israel faced temptation in the wilderness for forty years (Matt 4:1-11). Unlike Israel, Jesus overcomes temptation and begins his ministry as a light to the nations (Matt 4:12-17). Israel was to be a light to the nations upon their conquest in the land, but failed. Jesus as the true Israel not only brings light to the people, but gives them a new law in contrast to the law of Moses, further demonstrating how he fulfills the life of Israel from the Exodus to conquest in the land (Matt 5:1ff; cf., John 1:17). Jesus as the true Israel is given full authority to bring about God's promised work of renewal and restoration, which is framed around the idea of Exodus.

Israel experienced an Exodus from Egypt, but they also experienced an Exodus when they returned from Babylon. Jesus brings the final end to the exile that the Israelites experienced with Babylonian captivity. After Jesus fled to Egypt, Herod is angry that the child escaped and kills all the male children in Bethlehem. Matthew recognizes that this event is in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:15. The tears that existed in Jeremiah's day due to impending exile were not shed again until Bethlehem. The Davidic line was dethroned at the exile and was never recovered even after the exile.² In this way the people were still in exile and the tears that began in Jeremiah's day are climaxed and ended by the tears of the mothers at Bethlehem. These tears

¹ For a complete discussion on Exodus in the Gospels and Acts see Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) and David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

² Although Israel lived in the land again after Babylonian captivity they did not exist as a sovereign nation as they did under David and Solomon. Israel existed under the rule of foreign powers such as the Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

climaxed and ended because the one who will sit on David's throne and bring the people back from exile and perform a final Exodus has arrived. After Jeremiah 31:15 is the promise of a new covenant that will come about after the exile (Jer 31:31-34) and now that exile is coming to an end. The true Son is about to inaugurate a new covenant as he establishes the promises given to David and performs a final Exodus (Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20).

Throughout Jesus' ministry he fulfills the promises of a final Exodus foretold in the prophets, particularly Isaiah. Jesus will bring the oppressed and downtrodden deliverance from their enemies, which is ultimately the strong man who blinds the nations and has kept them in darkness prior to the coming of Christ (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21; cf., Isa 49:24-25). The miracles of Jesus fulfill the promises of a new Exodus in which God will heal his people and provide for their needs (Matt 8:17; 14:13-21; 15:29-39; Mark 2:1-13; 6:33-34; Luke 4:1-44; 5:18-26; 9:10-17; cf., Isa 35:5-6; 49:9-10; 53:4; 61:1-2). At the mountain of transfiguration Jesus fulfills the role as the true Moses who also went up on the mountain of God (Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). On the mountain Jesus speaks about the new Exodus he is about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). This new Exodus is not one from physical bondage, but from spiritual bondage, which he accomplishes with his own blood as the true Passover Lamb (John 1:29; 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:18-19). As the true Israel, Jesus appoints twelve sons to carry on the work of shepherding his people after he accomplishes redemption (Matt 4:18-22; 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-15; John 21:15-17) and as the true Moses, he chooses seventy (two) servants and sends them out to do the work of God in light of this final Exodus (Luke 10:1ff; cf., Num 11:16-17, 24-25; Deut 18:15-19; John 5:45-46; 6:14).

The final Exodus that God performs in Jesus is not just for Israel, but for all the nations. God is bringing about the deliverance of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation (Rev 5:9-10). God's deliverance is from the tyranny of Satan who has oppressed the nations. Jesus leads God's elect from a state of darkness to light by lifting himself up and drawing all men to himself (John 3:14; 12:30-32; cf., Num 21:9). The book of Acts speaks clearly to the Exodus accomplished by Christ's sacrifice and its power to bring people out of darkness (Acts 1:8; 8:25-39; 9:15-16; 10:34-48; 13:44-52; 14:1-28; 17:22-34; 19:11-41; 28:23-31). Where Israel had failed after the Exodus event to be a light to the nations, the true Israel fulfills this role and brings the good news of salvation to all the nations; making all those who trust in Christ God's chosen people (Rom 9:25-26; cf., Hos 1:10; 2:23). God's new people, having been identified with Christ in his death and resurrection by baptism, must undergo the same experiences as the promised Messiah. Believers must face a time of temptation and suffering even as Christ and must be a light to the nations even as he was (Matt 5:16; 28:18-20; Phil 2:6-11; 3:10; Col 1:24; 1 Pet 2:12). The already-not-yet dynamic demonstrates that although Jesus has already brought about final Exodus with his death, the church awaits an even greater Exodus that has not yet arrived, in which God will bring final deliverance from death and suffering.

Jesus, attested by God with signs and miracles, is better than both the angels who gave the first covenant and is better than Moses who mediated the first covenant because he now inaugurates a new or better covenant (Heb 1:5-14; 2:1-4; 3:2-6; 8:5-6). Jesus is also better than Joshua who, although he led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, did not secure the rest that God promised (Heb 4:1-11; cf., Psa 95:7-11). Jesus has secured this rest for God's people with his own sacrifice and he has gone ahead of his people to prepare a path for them to follow (Heb 4:16-5:10; 10:9-10; 12:1-2; 13:20). Although this rest is secured, the church must continue to press onward toward their heavenly rest (Heb 4:11; 11:13-14; 13:14). God's people must

press on and endure in the face of persecution and immorality knowing that God has prepared a heavenly Jerusalem for those who remain faithful (Heb 11:1-40; 12:18-24). Because God's promise of rest remains, God's people are presently undergoing a time of exile and wilderness experience. The writer of Hebrews has already alluded to this idea with the mention of a Sabbath rest remaining for God's people (Heb 4:1-11). Peter also refers to God's people living in present exile, as does James, with both admonishing the church to live wisely in the present evil age (1 Pet 1:1; 2:11-3:22; 5:10-14; 2 Pet 2:1; James 1:1ff). However, the most vivid description of the church living in present exile after Exodus is found in Revelation 12:1-17.

In Revelation 12:1-6 John sees a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:1). The symbolism identifies the woman as Israel and her adornment points to her glory (cf., Gen 37:9-10; Song of Sol 6:10; Rev 21:11, 22-27). The woman gives birth to a male child who is Jesus (Micah 5:3; cf., Isa 26:17-18; 54:1-4; 66:7-13; Micah 4:10). The woman refers to the believing people of God from both the Old and New Testament.³ John sees a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns with seven diadems (Rev 12:3). The dragon spoken of here is Satan, the prince of the world, the serpent of old (cf., Gen 3:1; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; Rev 12:9; cf., Isa 27:1). The dragon takes its tale and sweeps a third of the stars of heaven and throws them down to earth (Rev 12:4). The dragon throws them to earth where he and his "stars" (fallen angels) are going to seek to devour the male child (cf., Dan 8:10; Matt 25:41; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6). The symbolism is striking and clear. Satan and his forces of evil have been trying to destroy and devour the servant of God and the people of God. This battle began back in Genesis three and continued all throughout the Old Testament as Satan sought to deceive and destroy the nation of Israel with idolatry and immorality; however, God always preserved a remnant, who were faithful to the covenant promises.

At the time of Jesus' birth Satan unleashed a barrage of attempts to destroy him either by death or with temptation (Matt 2:1-18; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). However, unlike past attempts with some success, the dragon is not able to defeat the faithful and final son. This son does not follow after strange gods nor does he commit immorality, but is faithful to do the Father's will (John 4:35; 5:30; 6:38). The male child is caught up to God and his throne (Rev 12:5). This statement is clearly in reference to Jesus' ascension to the Father, where he sits with all authority awaiting the time of his return for his church and his judgment of the nations (Psa 110:1; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9; 2:32-36; 5:31; Heb 1:13; 10:13). Since the dragon was unable to destroy the male child, he makes war with the woman. The woman is still left on the earth, where she will face the venomous attacks of the dragon. God does not leave his people open to the attacks of Satan, but cares for them (Rom 16:20). The imagery of care is rooted in the Old Testament wilderness experience of Israel. As God led Israel out of bondage by the Exodus event, so Jesus led a second Exodus out of spiritual bondage (Exo 14:1ff; Luke 9:31; Rev 15:3). During the time between the Exodus and the Promised Land Israel lived in the wilderness. The wilderness experience for Israel was one of great blessing, but also one of great suffering. Moreover, wilderness experiences for individuals followed the same pattern of great blessing and suffering (1 Kings 19:3-8; Luke 1:80; Gal 1:17-18). Even in the life of Christ he experienced temptation in the wilderness, but overcomes and proves to be the faithful son (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1-13). Therefore, the church is also able to overcome because of Jesus' obedience (Heb 2:9-18; 12:1-2; Rev 12:11). Here the church is cared for by God during their wilderness

³ For further discussion on this view see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 621-680.

experience as they travel to the heavenly land (Heb 3:1-4:13; 11:13-16; cf., 1 Pet 1:1; 2:11; 5:13). During the church's wilderness experience there is great persecution, tribulation, and seduction (just like the nation of Israel), but the church is able to resist sin and pursue that heavenly rest because they have a better covenant enacted on better promises (1 Cor 10:1ff; Heb 3:1-4:16; 8:6-13).

During this time of exile God prepares a place for the woman (Rev 12:6). Verse six is not a reference to Jesus' statement that he goes and prepares a place for his people in the future⁴ (John 14:1-3), rather the reference is symbolic. In other words, "place" is not a city, building, or parcel of land, but God with his people. In the Old Testament his presence among his people meant that no matter their place (geographically) he would protect them (cf., Ezek 11:14-21; Acts 7:1-53).⁵ The place of refuge is God himself (Deut 8:14-16; Hos 2:14). God is with his people by virtue of the Spirit; thus, his people will be protected because God is their "place." God also nourishes the woman for 1260 days (Rev 12:6). God provided manna, quail, and water for the Israelites in the wilderness and in like manner God provides for his people during their wilderness experience (cf., Exo 16:1-21; 17:1-7). God's food and drink for his people in this present wilderness experience is Christ and his Word. Jesus is the true manna from heaven, who provides living water through the ministry of the Spirit and the Word (John 4:7-30; 6:26-40; 7:37-39). As people in exile, the people of God are to put on the whole armor of God in order to withstand the attacks of the dragon (Eph 6:10-18). The feast of the church is Christ himself, which is recalled in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a powerful symbol and an essential part of spiritual nourishment for the church as she is reminded of his work at the cross (1 Cor 11:23-26).

The dragon makes war with Michael the angel, who is the protector of God's people (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1). As God's representative, Michael throws Satan down to earth. By the work of Christ, Satan has been cast down along with his angels (Rev 12:7-9; cf., Matt 12:24-30; John 12:31; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Rev 20:2). Prior to his defeat Satan freely entered the heavenly places ready to accuse God's elect (Job 1:6; 2:1; 1 Kings 22:17-23; Zech 3:1-2; Luke 10:18; Rev 12:10), but here Satan has been cast down, his authority has been taken away, and his deception exposed because of the greater Exodus accomplished by Christ. Salvation has been secured for God's people (Rev 12:10-11). The people of God rejoice because his kingdom has come and defeated Satan (1 Cor 15:24-28). Again, while Satan still seems strong, he is a defeated foe. Therefore, the saints are able to overcome as Jesus overcame (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4; Rev 3:21).

Although defeated, Satan still seeks to destroy the church (Rev 12:13-17; cf., 1 Pet 5:8). The dragon persecutes God's people, but God protects them by giving them two wings of a great eagle (Rev 12:14; cf., Rev 12:6). Here the Exodus idea is reinforced and applied to the church (cf., Deut 32:10; Psa 17:8; Prov 7:2; Zech 2:8). As God took Israel out of Egypt on eagles wings, so he bears up and protects his church on eagles wings for a time, times, and a half of time (Exo 19:4; Deut 1:31-33; 32:10-11; 33:12; Psa 91:1-4; 103:5-7; Isa 40:31; cf., Psa 17:8;

⁴ For an excellent discussion on this passage see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 487-490. Carson argues that the emphasis on the passage is not Jesus "building" a place for God's people, but that his return insures that there is plenty of room for all of God's children, hence the use of "dwelling places."

⁵ God's presence with his people regardless of geographical location is fully described in Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:1-53. For further discussion of Stephen's sermon as it relates to God's presence with his people see the following link: <http://theroadtoemmaus.wordpress.com/2007/05/10/the-importance-of-stephens-sermon/>

36:7-8; 57:1; 61:4; 63:1-2; Isa 32:15; 35:1; 40:3; 41:18; 43:19-20; 51:3; 31:2; Ezek 34:25; Hos 2:14-15). The reference to wings denotes that God alone is the one who can provide salvation and bring deliverance to his people (cf., Matt 23:37-39; Rev 2:9; 3:9). Moreover, God's people are to separate themselves from the place of evil (the world order), which, for John, is synonymous with mystical Egypt, Sodom, and physical Jerusalem (Rev 11:8; 13:1ff; cf., Matt 24:15-26; Mark 13:14-22; Luke 21:20-24; Heb 13:12). The act of fleeing into the wilderness signifies this separation, even as Israel left Egypt (1 Cor 10:1-33). Again, the place of God's protection for his people is himself where he will bear them up and cover them with his salvation. Finally, God protects his people by having the world drink up Satan's lies (Rev 12:15). As God cast Satan down to earth he knew that Satan would seek to destroy his people, just as he always had. However, God's provision for his people is that the unbelieving world aids the church with their lust for Satan's lies (Rev 12:16; 17:1-9; cf., Exo 15:12). The flood of water that comes upon the church is deception because it comes from the mouth of the dragon where lies and blasphemies originate (James 3:1-11; cf., Rom 16:17-20; 2 Thess 2:9-10; 1 Tim 4:1; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:23-26; Rev 1:16; 11:5; 19:11). In the Old Testament water is synonymous with attempts to destroy God's people (2 Sam 22:5; Psa 69:1-2, 14-15; 124:4-5; 144:7-8; Isa 43:2; cf., Song of Sol 8:7). God uses evil to bring about his purposes and in this case the preservation of his people during their wilderness journey by having the world drink Satan's flood of deception (cf., Gen 50:20; Acts 4:27-29). Because the dragon is unsuccessful at destroying the woman with lies, he goes and makes war with the rest of her children (Rev 12:17). These children are believers because they keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The dragon has continued to persecute the woman (the church) and her children (individual believers) all throughout time (cf., 1 Cor 16:15; 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; 1 John 2:1).

Although God's people face persecution and seduction during their present wilderness experience God has provided protection and nourishment for his people. The new Exodus accomplished by Jesus at the cross is a foretaste of that final Exodus when Jesus will return and hand over his kingdom to the Father and defeat that final foe—death (1 Cor 15:24, 50-57). One day God's redeemed people will forever rest in God's promised place, sit down at God's banquet table to enjoy him forever, and serve him as a kingdom of priests (Matt 8:11; 26:29; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 19:7-10; 20:6; 22:3-5). On that last day when the church makes its final Exodus the saints will meet their Savior in the air (1 Thess 4:13-18) and rejoice with palm branches remembering God's provision during their wilderness experience (Rev 7:9-17).⁶ They will sing a song just like the Israelites sang when they came out of Egypt, but this song will be a new song; a song of the Lamb because Jesus has accomplished a better Exodus (Rev 15:3-4).

⁶ Palm branches were used in the Old Testament to celebrate the Feast of Booths, which was a remembrance of God's provision during the Israel's wilderness wanderings (Lev 23:40, 43; Neh 8:15; cf., Zech 14:12-21; John 12:13). See the following link for further explanation: <http://theroadtoemmaus.wordpress.com/2007/07/14/pbtp-the-feast-of-booths/>