

Redemption: Egypt and Eternity

Hebrews 11.23-29

Mike Elliott • Dominion Covenant Church • July 5, 2009

Introduction

[Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11.23-29]

[Prayer for Teaching and Hearing of God's Word]

The story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt are so common that most people can recount the main details in a heartbeat. But we must be sure that we don't merely see it as a story. That is a common way for critics and skeptics to discount piercing biblical truth, by saying, "oh, that is just a story."

A story, yes, but much more than a story. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he says that the details of the exodus and the Wilderness years that followed are examples, written for our admonition, so that we do not grow lax or fall into temptation (1Cor 10.11-13).

So the story of the exodus is real history in that it actually happened, and it is history that teaches critical lessons for our day. Paul mentions these stories in order to spur his audience to perseverance; today I want to take one step further back. You see, to persevere in your salvation you have to first be saved and the exodus redemption is a crucial picture of salvation itself. By gaining a better understanding of the exodus we gain a better understanding of salvation, which –just like it was for the Israelites– is for us a matter of life and death. May we firmly know, believe, and live out the critical truth that,

The exodus teaches salvation by grace through faith in the atoning work of the Messiah.¹

I. The exodus showed salvation principles.

Let us begin with four great principles of salvation that God powerfully showed in and through the exodus from Egypt.

¹ I am indebted to Robert L. Reymond for significant points that led to the first half of my outline (see his *New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, pp518-521).

A. God's sovereign, loving, electing grace originated both the purpose and execution of the exodus redemption (Dt 7.6-8).

First, we see that the purpose and execution of the exodus came from God's sovereign, loving, electing grace.

Deuteronomy 7.6 “For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. **7** The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; **8** but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

We read there: God *chose* them & he *loved* them not because they were special but *to keep his word* which he had determined generations prior.

Indeed, at that point in time the Israelites were far from special: nearly all of them were involved in idolatry (Ex 12.12, Dt 26.7) and were exceedingly sinful (Dt 9.6-7)—not all that much different from their Egyptian neighbors.

So too are people throughout history redeemed due to God's sovereign, loving, electing grace. In the letter to the Ephesians we read God the Father, in love, predestined us according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph 1.4-5). Elsewhere Christians are called “brethren beloved by the Lord because God from the beginning chose you for salvation” (2Th2.13).

Clearly, presently and in the exodus, God is the sovereign, loving author of redemption.

B. God's power, not the strength of man, accomplished the exodus redemption (Ex 3.19-20).

The second similarity lies in the fact that even the strongest of individuals could not bring about the exodus from Egypt. Try as he may by his own means, Moses was unable to do it. Recall, (Ex 2) while he was living in Pharaoh's household he looked out and saw the injustices being perpetrated against his brethren. He interceded for his people and what came of it? he was labeled a murdered and had to flee to the desert.

Later, God explained this to him:

Exodus 3.19 But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. **20** So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go.

Moses' mighty hand was not enough; it took something, someone, far greater to achieve the goal; namely, God's power. Over and over again in the exodus we see God getting the credit for the great work *he* did. The 15th chapter of the book of Exodus has a beautiful song composed by Moses. At this point they have crossed through the sea, the waters returned on top of their pursuers, and they are looking at dead Egyptians on the seashore. Moses writes:

Exodus 15.1 "I will sing to the LORD,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!

6 "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power;
Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.

7 And in the greatness of Your excellence
You have overthrown those who rose against You;
You sent forth Your wrath;
It consumed them like stubble.

11 "Who *is* like You, O LORD, among the gods?
Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 You stretched out Your right hand;
The earth swallowed them.

13 You in Your mercy have led forth
The people whom You have redeemed;
You have guided *them* in Your strength
To Your holy habitation.

18 "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."

So too are people throughout history redeemed by God's power and not their own, even their own presumed "mighty power". The apostle Paul pleads with the Ephesians to understand and know "the exceeding greatness of [God's] power toward" them (Eph 1.18-20).

Clearly, presently and in the exodus, God's power is what accomplishes redemption.

C. Only those who personally appropriated the blood of the lamb were saved by the exodus redemption (Ex 12.7-13).

Third, as much as the exodus redemption was brought about by God himself and not by man, individuals still had to personally appropriate the blood of the lamb to be saved. Exodus 12.7, 12-13:

7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. 13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

God's power was powerful to destroy all those not under the covering of blood. Each family had to partake of the feast and anoint their doorposts in order to be counted among the saved community.

So too must people throughout history personally appropriate the atoning blood. In Romans 10.9 we read, "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Clearly, presently and in the exodus, we must have faith in the sacrifice made on our behalf.

D. A God-glorifying community was created as a result of the exodus redemption (Ex 10.3).

Fourth, the exodus redemption created a community of believers that were liberated from the bondage and hard servitude of their Egyptian taskmasters and set free to serve the LORD. Nearly ten times Moses gives YHWH's ultimatum to Pharaoh:

Exodus 10.3 "Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews...let my people go that they may serve me."

It took more trials until Pharaoh was willing to let them go, and when he finally did they made a complete break with Egypt. God guided them to

safety, and they praised him for his awesome power and glory (as we read earlier in Moses' song). God firmly established them as a

Exodus 19.6 "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Brethren, isn't that the same for us? The Apostle Peter writes,

1Peter 2.9 "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

The Israelites were brought out of Egypt to serve the LORD, right? They did that by endeavoring to live out the revealed will of God in the ten commandments. Peter says there that we have been chosen in order that we may proclaim God's praises. Peter also tells us *how* to do that:

1Peter 2.11 Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, **12** having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God... **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men

They were to serve God through obedience and so too are we to serve God through the obedience of good works, good works which God has prepared for us (Eph 2.10).

Clearly, presently and in the exodus, those whom God has redeemed have been constituted a special people who bring God glory by living in obedience to his will.

II. The exodus instructed Israel about faith in Christ.

We have seen thus far that the exodus redemption, just like our redemption, was a gracious, powerful work of the sovereign God appropriated by the faith of individuals in substitutionary atoning blood that established them as his chosen community who are to live in obedience.

This faith in substitutionary atoning blood is, of course, faith in Christ. In this way the exodus instructed Israel about Christ. We shouldn't think that people then were ignorant, or that there were two ways of salvation—one then and one now.

To this we must say NO. The object of faith was the same; they looked forward to the promise of the Messiah as pictured in animal sacrifice whereas we look back to the Messiah's work completed on the cross. The exodus most certainly instructed Israel about faith in Christ because if it

instructed them to put their faith in anything or anyone else, it was an instrument of idolatry.

This is, of course, the testimony of Scripture. Jesus repeatedly said that Moses and the Prophets testified and wrote of him (Jn 5.39, 46). We are told that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day and saw it and was glad (Jn 8.56). Further, Abraham was specifically told to "command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice" (Gen 18.19). So the whole theological background of the exodus set the stage for an event that would further point towards Christ.

There are two specific factors in the exodus that show this especially clearly: the paschal lamb and the person Moses.

A. Paschal lamb a type of Christ (1Cor 5.7).

The Israelites were instructed to select a Passover lamb that was without blemish with no bones broken; its blood covered the people and protected them during the plague of the firstborn.

Christ was a lamb without spot or blemish (1Pt 1.19), not one of his bones was broken (Jn 19.36), and his blood cleanses us from all sin (1Jn 1.7). To top it off, Scripture quite explicitly says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1Cor 5.7).

B. Moses a type of Christ (Dt. 18.15).

Second, we turn to Moses. Deuteronomy 18.15 contains a profound promise that took many years to fulfill: it is written, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear." And oh how many ways this is true. It is fascinating to look at the wide variety of ways in which the life experience, personality, and actions of Moses pointed to Christ:

- they were both Israelites (Ex 2.1-2/Lk2, 4),
- they were both born under hostile foreign rule (Ex 1/Mt 2.1),
- as infants they were both threatened with death (Ex 1.22/Mt 2.16),
- they were both adopted by earthly parents (Ex 2.10/Mt 1.19-21),
- they both spent their childhood in Egypt (Ex 1-2/Mt 2.13),
- they both had an affinity for their brethren (Ex 2.11/Heb 2.11),
- they both were rejected by their brethren (Acts 7.27/Jn 1.11),

- they were both meek, prayerful, prophets, priests, judges, mediators, intercessors, etc.

About 100 points of overlap in all. Definitely, Moses' life pointed the way to an even greater one who would follow him, the Christ.

III. The exodus pales in comparison to the Cross.

Despite all these similarities and overlaps, it must be said that Christ far exceeds Moses, the New Covenant far exceeds the Old, and eternal redemption of the soul far exceeds the temporal escape from Egypt.

A. All who came out of Egypt rebelled (Heb 3.16) vs. None will be lost (Jn 10.28).

As great as the exodus was, something was lacking. It is a sad fact that when speaking of those who had applied the Passover blood, been spared during the plague of the firstborn, been led through the sea on dry ground, people who had sung praises to God on the far shore—these very same people Hebrews 3.16 says all them rebelled. Their bodies were strewn across the desert because of their disobedience. They did not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief.

Yet, Jesus himself says of his sheep's redemption,

John 10.28 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand."

That promise is sure because Christ works in us to accomplish it.
Amen!

B. Repeated sacrifices to sanctify the flesh (Heb 7.27a, 9.13, 10.4) vs. Final sacrifice once for sin (Heb 7.27b, 9.12b, 10.12).

Another critical difference lies in the singular, unique event of the Cross. Yes, there was one actual pass-over event, but the blood sacrifices continued in commemoration of it because the blood of goats and calves had to be repeated (Heb 7.27a) and could only purify the flesh (Heb 9.13) since it lacked the ability to take away sin (Heb 10.4); whereas Christ's sacrifice was once for all (7.27b, 9.12b) to take away sins forever (Heb 10.12).
Hallelujah.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, we can now see more clearly the striking similarities and occasional, though very significant, differences between the

exodus redemption and Christ's redemption. Glorious, yes, was the exodus but Oh how much more glorious was the Cross. With saints of old, let us fix our eyes firmly upon the fact that salvation is and always has been by grace through faith in the atoning work of the Messiah pictured then in the Passover Lamb and accomplished for sure on the Cross of Calvary.

Don't be like humanists and pagans the world over who either deny their sins or seek another way to do away with their sins; they falsely and fatally think blood atonement isn't necessary.

Don't be like Jews who wait for a messiah to come and save them; they falsely and fatally wait in vain because the one and only Messiah has already come and will come again to judge.

Don't be like the cults who say faith isn't enough and God's grace isn't complete unto salvation; they add to the word and work of God and deny the full sufficiency of the cross.

Don't be like the misled Christians who say Old Testament saints were saved in a fundamentally different way than we are today; they tear asunder the Scriptures and separate what God has joined together: that is, as Peter put it, his one holy people, his royal priesthood, his holy nation.

So I urge you to come, submit yourself to the Lord of the universe and be a part of "this chosen generation...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Pe 2.9). Come, obtain mercy, rest, and eternal life.

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