

# THE GREAT EXODUS

## Exodus 3:1–10 • Char Brodersen

**Introduction:** Good morning, church! This morning, we are entering a new chapter in our “Story of” series. As I’ve mentioned, we wanted to do something new this year by taking our church through a biblical theology in order to know and understand how the whole of Scripture works together to tell God’s great story of redemption in and through Jesus Christ. This morning, we are carrying on with the Story of the People, all of which concerns the family of Abraham—the Jewish people and nation—how God takes a family of slaves and sets them free to be his peculiar people.

The story of the Exodus is one of the most well-known and rehearsed biblical stories. It has all the pieces that make for an epic story—a tyrannical evil king, an oppressed, disenfranchised, and enslaved people, the underdog hero and deliverer with a speech impediment, and the miraculous intervention and aid by God in the plagues on Pharaoh and his kingdom, and finally the release of God’s people as they cross through the Red Sea on dry ground!

The Exodus is the biblical story. It’s not just Israel’s historical story. It is actually the great metanarrative of the whole biblical story. What I mean is that it is the story, the redemptive blueprint, that Scripture keeps referencing again and again like an orchestral melody that it picks up and carries. At times it descends, or drops out, but then picks it up and carries it to new heights and dynamics each time. Once you begin to see it, you can’t unsee it. (For those interested in this topic I recommend *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing Themes of Redemption Through Scripture* by Alastair Roberts and Andrew Wilson.)

The reason for this is because the Bible is telling the Great Story of God and the World. The Exodus is a true story that foretells the great cosmic story of redemption, which means that the Exodus is our story as well. How do I mean?

There are multiple reasons for why I believe this, but if I could just point out a few in the beginning narrative of Exodus, there are so many hints, indicators, or hyperlinks that show this is an inverted retelling of the Garden Temptation and the promise of a the Head-crushing Deliverer.

When we open up the book of Exodus, we find curious and familiar language being used. It says in Exodus 1:6: **“The Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied, increased in numbers and became so numerous that they filled the land.”** (Two hyperlinks should appear to us. This is what God had commanded Adam and Eve in the Garden, and it is being fulfilled through the family of Abraham, just as God has promised to Abraham—his descendants are so numerous, they fill the land of Egypt.)

But then it adds that a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. He sees the fruitfulness, multiplying, and filling the land—God’s command to humanity—as a threat to his kingdom and something that needs to be stopped. This is the first time in the biblical record where humans are named as a threat. So he sets taskmasters over the Israelites to oppress and discourage them; he enslaves them and even puts them under population control by murdering their baby boys—first by commanding the midwives to kill them immediately after they come out of the womb, and then when that doesn’t work, he commands that they be drowned in the Nile River. Pharaoh is clearly a serpent-like character who wants to stop the fruitfulness and blessing of God’s people. He is a picture of the venomous, murderous Garden serpent.

But as an inversion of the Garden temptation, here, God’s redemption is at work to rescue and redeem. So rather than the serpent deceiving the woman, it is the women (the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah) who will deceive and outsmart the serpent king and preserve the lives of God’s people.

Pharaoh, the serpent king, is deceived and outsmarted first through the Hebrew midwives lying to him and then again through Moses’s mother who disobeys the king’s command to throw her child into the Nile River

and hides him instead. Then when Moses can be hidden no longer, he is put in a basket and floats down the Nile and is rescued by Pharaoh's own daughter and brought up in Pharaoh's own house. Little does Pharaoh realize that this child is God's anointed deliverer who will crush the serpent king's head and kingdom and set God's people free.

All of this should be causing the readers' antennas to be going off. The book of Exodus, right out the gate, is already showing us that this is more than *a* story—this is *the* story about humanity's redemption. In the words of C. S. Lewis, Aslan is on the move.

## 1. **Jesus, the True and Greater Moses who accomplishes the True and Greater Exodus**

- A. **Rather than spend our time and focus on the story of Exodus, I want us to consider its greater and broader theme for the people of God. As I said, this is our redemption story, and all of it is pointing ultimately to Jesus.**
- B. **The Wilderness Feeding**—The connections of Jesus to Moses are all over the New Testament. Any serious Bible reader knows that. For example, in John's Gospel, we have Jesus in the wilderness feeding the multitude because he has compassion on them (reminding us of God's compassion on his enslaved people in Egypt). Five thousand men are numbered, not including the woman and children, just like the Exodus narrative, with them sitting down in numbers of 50, and with leftovers numbering 12 baskets filled, reminding us of the 12 tribes of Israel that were led by Moses through the wilderness and fed by God with manna from heaven.
- C. John throws in this minor/major detail—it was the time of Passover. Why would this reference be important?
  - i. **The first Passover** was the night that the people of Israel were freed from their 400-plus years of slavery in Egypt. God's judgment on Pharaoh and the people of Egypt passed through the land, killing the firstborn of the families whose homes were not covered in the blood of a slain lamb. God had commanded the people to take a spotless lamb, to kill it, cook it and eat it, and to take the blood of the lamb and smear it on the post of their house doors. As God's destroying angel saw the blood, he would **pass over** their houses, sparing the life of the firstborn. A lamb would suffer and be sacrificed in place of the people. The lamb would die as the substitute, taking upon itself the sin and judgment of the people. This memorial now commemorated in the Passover festival and meal is a practice and observance for Jews even to this day.
  - ii. In John's Gospel, Jesus has already been introduced to the multitude as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Those listening to John the baptizer would have immediately understood the historical reference to a lamb that takes away sin. Their Holy Scriptures (the Old Testament) had a number of pictures readily brought to mind: The Lamb provided by God for Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22); the Lamb of Isaiah 53 who was led to the slaughter for the transgressions, pain, and suffering of God's people; and perhaps most obvious of all, the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12.
  - iii. By the end of John's story, the meaning is clear. The death of Jesus takes place in this Gospel on the afternoon when the Passover lambs are being killed in the Temple. God is providing a lamb—Jesus, the true Passover lamb—so the world's judgment can be removed, a lamb to take away the sin of the world. John, like many New Testament writers, wants us to understand the events concerning Jesus as a new and better Exodus story. Just as God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, so God was now bringing a new people out of an even older and darker slavery—the slavery of sin.
- D. **The Crossing of the Sea**—immediately after the feeding, we have Jesus crossing the perilous sea, leading his disciples safely to the other side. Jesus comes to his disciples walking on the waters and says something that should make our jaws drop. Some of your translations read, **"It is I, do not be**

**afraid,”** and they say this because in our language, what Jesus actually says doesn’t sound grammatically correct. He literally says to them, **“I AM, do not be afraid.”** Jesus here takes to himself that same name that Yahweh gave to Moses. When Moses asked, “Who shall I say sent me when the children of Israel ask?” God replies, **“I AM that I AM, that is my name.”**

- i. We are witnessing in this story what the Psalmist celebrated about God’s power over the seas.
  - a. **“The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.”—Psalm 77:16–19**
  - b. The same God who parted the Red Sea is the one who walks on the water and calms the storm.
  - c. If we haven’t caught on yet (because the multitudes and Jesus disciples haven’t), Jesus follows this up with a teaching on how he is like the bread from heaven that the Israelites ate in the wilderness, except he is the true bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Jesus said to the multitude, **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”—John 6:51**
  - d. Jesus is reenacting all the elements of the Exodus. In John’s retelling of the Exodus story, Jesus fulfills all the main character roles—he is YHWH, he is Moses, he is the spotless lamb, whose blood must cover the people for their protection and preservation, he is the living bread that comes down from heaven in order to give life.
- E. **The True And Greater Exodus**—If that isn’t enough, in Luke’s Gospel chapter 9, we have Herod, the false king of Israel who is like the serpent king, Pharaoh, who has killed God’s prophet John the baptizer and now seeks an audience with Jesus. Jesus flees Herod’s region with his disciples and goes into the wilderness where he meets the multitudes and feeds them with miraculous bread (with the same details as John’s gospel being highlighted). But chapter 9 does not end with a Jesus sermon but with a great revelation of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus climbs a mountain with his inner circle of disciples (a hyperlink to Moses climbing Mount Sinai to receive the word of YHWH), and there, like on Sinai, a revelation of Israel’s God is made known.
  - i. **“About eight days after ... he took Peter, John, and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his (Exodus), which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.’ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone.”—Luke 9:28–36**
- F. Jesus is about to bring his exodus to fulfillment at Jerusalem.
  - i. The Jesus story is an exodus story. Jesus is reenacting the exodus story not only for us to see that he is the same God of the exodus—Yahweh in the flesh—but if Yahweh has come in the flesh, he has come to do something. Just like in the original Exodus story, he has come to set humanity free, to deliver us from our oppressors and lead us out of Egypt and into a good and wide land!

- ii. Remember God’s words to Moses. The Lord said, **“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. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land.”—Exodus 3:7–8**
  - a. Jesus is here to perform the Great Exodus—God’s claim on and liberating of humanity from the tyranny of sin, death, and Satan!
- iii. Whatever else John and the other Gospel writers are telling us, they want us to see the Gospels as The Story of God and the World—the story of redemption fulfilled.
  - a. *“The Gospels are about the creator God acting in a new way within his much-loved creation. It is about the way in which the long story which began in Genesis reached the climax the creator had always intended. John, like many New Testament writers, wants us to understand the events concerning Jesus as a new and better Exodus story. Just as God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, so God was now bringing a new people out of an even older and darker slavery.”—N. T. Wright, John for Everyone*
  - b. Humanity, through its rebellion to the one true God and father of all creation, has found itself enslaved under the tyranny of sin, death, and Satan. God has seen our affliction and heard the cries of humanity and has come down to rescue us (Exodus 3:7–8). He has raised up a deliverer and with his mighty hand and outstretched arm, the same arm that Isaiah the prophet will foresee (Isaiah 52–53). He has humiliated the gods and powers of this world, defeating them by triumphing over them through his cross (Colossians 2:13–15). He has delivered us by the precious blood of the Lamb (no spot or blemish, no broken bones), leading us through baptismal waters, as Moses led the people through the Red Sea, so that we are brought through cleansed and renewed—a new identity, a new humanity. Leading us and preserving us with his presence as we journey to the Promised Land of the New Creation.
  - c. This is what the gospel is all about—it’s about redemption. And you all have heard me before, but we’ve gotten it so wrong in making the gospel only about our sins being forgiven so we can go to heaven when we die. The Gospel is about God becoming King again, him finally destroying the powers that have kept humanity enslaved for all of history and leading us into the life he always meant for us—to be his treasured people, his sons and daughters who dwell in peace and harmony with him, ruling over his New Creation. This is what Jesus has accomplished in his Exodus.

**Conclusion:** Exodus is God’s claiming and releasing of his people as well as his preservation of the people by supplying them with food and rescuing them from the threatening sea. But this is also our story, each of us who has placed our faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

1. **God’s Claiming**—In and through the work of Jesus’ Exodus, we have a new identity. Whoever you are, whatever your history might be, whatever false identity you are living by, if you have believed in Jesus, God no longer identifies you by your sin, your past, your slavery. You are no longer a slave; you are now a child of God.
  - A. **“But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do**

**not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.”—Isaiah 43:1–5**

2. **God’s Releasing**—Through Jesus’ Exodus, you are now set free from the power and bondage of sin. All your sins and the sin committed against you have been nailed to the cross, the Lamb has been slain, and God has lead you out of slavery. Sin no longer has you in its grasp; you have been set free and given power over sin through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
  - A. But God’s purpose in our “Exodus” through Jesus goes far beyond deliverance from sin, Satan, death, and judgment. God brought his people out of Egypt so that they would be set free to know him and worship him. God made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai: “I will walk among you, and be your God, and you will be my people.” God has set us free in order that we might know him and worship him, that we enjoy life in fellowship with him.
  - B. Theologians Andrew Wilson and Alistair Roberts write: *“Escaping from Egypt is only half of the exodus. It is easy for us to forget this, in an age where freedom is understood as merely being freed from: oppression, from constraint or whatever. This aspect of liberation, as wonderful as it is, is only half of the deal. In the scriptures, more emphasis is placed on the freedom for: for worship, for flourishing, for growth in obedience and joy and glory. Human beings are not designed to be free from all constraint, slaves to nothing but our own passions, triumphantly enthroned as our own masters, even our own gods. Everybody serves somebody. So the point of the exodus is not just for Israel (or for us) to find deliverance from serving the old master. It is for us to find delight in serving the new one.”—Echoes of Exodus*
    - i. We want to take hold if this new freedom under King Jesus and walk in this newness of life.
  - C. **God’s Preservation**—Just as God brought the children of Israel into the Promised Land, he will bring us safely into the kingdom of God! You and I will be preserved both body and soul for the kingdom of God. Through God’s power, presence, and provision, all your needs will be met, and he will continue to rescue you out of every danger, toil, and snare.

**Communion:** As we come to the table of the Lord this morning, we come as a people who have been set free from slavery to sin, death, and Satan. I imagine for many of us, there are still reminders in our lives of our past—our slavery to sin and to Satan. Maybe that is manifest in your current struggles with sin and temptation.

**This table is a weekly, physical reminder—that we have been set free by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We are washed, we are clean. We have been given a new identity and a new purpose in Christ Jesus, and that is to live for God and to live with God—and he is leading us forward to new creation. The more we take hold of this truth, the more we believe it, the more we live it—our old self, the past, our sin, our slavery will become a distant memory as we live into the new self—which has been redeemed by Jesus.**

We know that because of human sinfulness and brokenness, there is not one of us who has lived up to the ideal of what God created us for—to love him supremely and to love our neighbor as ourselves. So as we come to the table this morning, we come as a people in need of forgiveness and in need of redemption and salvation. And that is what Jesus offer us at this table—forgiveness, redemption, and salvation. His life for our life; his righteousness for our sin and brokenness.

**Prayer—**

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name.  
Amen.*