

Have you ever found yourself in a place you never intended to go? You knew where you *should* go, you knew where you *wanted* to be but somehow you ended up somewhere else. (Story of being in the wrong restroom.) A funny thing happened to Abraham's descendents on their way to the Promised Land. Today's question is, "Where are we going?" Or, "How does this story end?"

In Genesis 1 God created Adam and Eve to spread His glory throughout the earth. In Genesis 3 they sinned "and fell short of the glory of God." But God had a plan and God had a man. He made a promise to Abraham not only to bless him and his descendents but to bless all the people of the earth through him. In Genesis 22 we get a foretaste of how God intended to reverse the consequences of the fall when He commanded Abraham to offer up his only son. Abraham's obedience was rewarded with a substitute for Isaac which God provided so that Isaac would not die but fulfill God's promise of Abraham becoming the father of many nations.

God regularly reminded Abraham of His promise...Gen. 12:1-3; 15; 22:15-18. In Gen. 15 God provided a creative multi-media presentation complete with a smoking pot and a flaming torch to reaffirm the covenant. But this restatement is different. This time there is some bad news, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

Genesis 15:13-14

Abraham's descendents found themselves in a difficult predicament. The people who were supposed to set others free found themselves in captivity in Egypt. Once again God paints a picture of ultimate redemption when He sets them free. They escape the bondage of Pharaoh and set out for their Promised Land. Today we are going to look at the Exodus and discover some things that are "hidden in plain sight." The experience of Israel's escape from captivity in Egypt and their subsequent journey to the Promised Land parallels the Christian experience in many ways. From the day of our decision to follow Christ to the day we walk through the pearly gates we can count on two common experiences foreshadowed in the Exodus.

I. You can count on the pursuit of an ancient enemy. We will not escape captivity without a fight. God said it would be so when He cursed the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field...I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise (NIV – crush) you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." **Gen. 3:14-15**

The seed of Adam and Eve passed through the seed of Abraham which passed through the seed of David and ultimately produced Jesus Christ, the lamb who crushes the head of the serpent. Even though the devil was defeated at the cross we are at war. There will be enmity between the devil's offspring and Adam and Eve's offspring until the Serpent-Killer returns to conclude this divine drama. In the meantime the enemy attacks us on two fronts, without and within.

The external front is a direct attack against the people of God. The experience of Abraham's descendents in Egypt reminds us that the enemy will pursue us to prevent us from getting to the place God has prepared for us. (**Ex. 14:5, 9, 10-12**). In this world, God's people are almost always outnumbered and overmatched.

This world lies in the power of the evil one and the game is rigged. God, Jesus, the Bible, the church, Christianity, all these things are constantly under attack. For example, *Comedy Central...is developing a whole animated series around Jesus Christ... "JC," (is) a half-hour show about Christ wanting to escape the shadow of his 'powerful but apathetic father' and live a regular life in New York City. In the show, God is preoccupied with playing video games while Christ, 'the ultimate fish out of water,' tries to adjust to life in the big city. "In general, comedy in purist form always makes some people uncomfortable," said Comedy Central's head of original programming Kent Alterman. When asked if the show might draw some fire, especially coming on the heels of the network's decision to censor the Muslim faith's religious figure on "South Park," Alterman said it's too early in the show's development to be concerned about such matters.* The irony of course is that Comedy Central has censored a cartoon depicting the Prophet Muhammed so as not to upset Muslims. Apparently Jesus and His followers are fair game.

These external attacks are designed to strike fear in our hearts. Fear is the enemy's greatest weapon. The key word is found in Ex. 14:10...“very frightened.” The purpose of these fear tactics is to get us to look back...**Ex. 16:3**. Remember the story of Lot whose wife looked back as they fled Sodom? She was turned into a pillar of salt. Why? She was afraid to leave Sodom. She preferred the certainty of the past over the uncertainty of the future.

Bob Huggins (basketball coach at WVU) once caught a ride from an old farmer in his pick up truck. Huggins noticed there was no rear view mirror and pointed it out. The farmer made the profound statement, “Son, I ain't goin' backwards.” Neither should we. Fear is antithetical to the life of faith. That's why “Do not fear” appears 366 times in the Bible, once for every day of the year. The life of faith looks forward not back. **Luke 9:62**, “But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." The devil wants to strike fear in our hearts in order to paralyze us and get us to go backwards. Listen to the words of Moses in **Exodus 14:13**, “But Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.’”

On the internal front the devil is a master of deception...**Ex. 32:1, 4**. The people were deceived into believing that God's delays are God's denials. They grew impatient and insisted on having a god to lead them forward. Even Aaron got caught up in the deception...**32:21-24**. When Moses finds out he is not happy. He appeals to God's covenant to spare the people. **Exodus 32:13**, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.'"

We are tempted daily but God promises a way of escape. **1 Cor. 10:1-13**. God will make a way. **Exodus 14:22**, “The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and

the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.” God will provide so that...

II. You can count on the provision of an awesome God. Just think of all the things God provided in the wilderness, things that He still provides for His people.

- God provided daily bread. The people of Israel received Manna every morning. (Ex. 16:3-5). God knew they would want to hoard the stuff but that was forbidden so they would learn to trust in His provision.

- God provided daily instruction. He gave them the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) and all the corresponding laws that were intended to preserve them as a people. His commandments are not burdensome. They are for our good and His glory. By giving out His instructions God made it possible to recognize His true followers. Those who embrace His word and obey it are children of God.

- God sustained them through daily worship (Ex. 25-31). God provided a place to meet and a community of priests to minister to the people. **Exodus 29:43-46**, "I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. ⁴⁴ "I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶They 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 in their midst looked forward to a day when Jesus Himself would come to earth and “tabernacle” among His people. The priesthood was a picture of how one day all of God’s people would serve Him as priests...19:4-6.

- God provided His presence to guide them. (Ex. 40:34-38). In the same way Jesus promised His disciples that the day would come when they would have access to the Holy Spirit who would act as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Jesus said, “When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

John 16:13-15

The O.T. spells out the details of how God’s people go from captivity in Egypt to the land God promised them. It is not just the story of an ancient people. It is your story and mine. So what am I to take away from this story? Four reminders:

1. We were all born into captivity. Just as generation after generation were born into slavery

in Egypt, we were all slaves to sin. In Ephesians 2:1, Paul says, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...” But the Good News is there is a way out.

2. The lamb set us free by paying a price for our redemption. The Bible makes sure we know that Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

The lamb in Exodus was to be without defect. Jesus was without sin. **1 Pe. 1:18-19** says, “You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.”

The lamb was to be a young one, cut down in its prime before it had time to fully mature. Jesus, the lamb of God, was cut down in His prime.

None of lamb’s bones were to be broken in the process of preparing it. **John 19:33-36** says, “But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵ The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶ These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’” (Exodus 12:46; Num. 9:12; Psalm 34:20). Jesus is our Passover.

3. We are all immigrants on the earth awaiting our true citizenship in heaven. The people of God could have made their way from Egypt to the Promised Land in a few short days but it took 40 years. Why? The answer is usually a litany of sins committed by the people of Israel. They were complainers, rebels, ingrates, stubborn, and all that is true. But it is equally true that spiritual growth is a long, slow process. Each day we are on this earth we are reminded that this is not our permanent home. Whether we hear about some horrible crime or a terrorist attack or even see those images of black oil continuously gushing into the waters of the Gulf, we know that this is NOT the Promised Land. Our time on earth is a temporary experience during which God prepares us for the Promised Land.

4. We will get home. Jesus said so. For the believer the question of where we are going is settled by the question Jesus was asked, “Where are you going?” Jesus said, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also. **John 14:1-3**

Moses, the deliverer, foreshadowed Jesus the ultimate deliverer. Moses got the people to the Promised Land but there was no rest there. But Jesus is the one greater than Moses. John’s Gospel points that out in many ways. (Jn. 1:17; 3:14; 5:45-46; Moses gave manna - 6:31-35 but Jesus is the bread of life, Moses struck the rock – 1 Cor. 10:4. The rock was Christ.) Jesus offers deliverance this morning. He offers forgiveness from sin and freedom from a futile way of life. Are you ready to get out of Egypt? “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today.” 14:13

I want to close with communion in a similar way to how the people of Israel were required to eat the Passover meal. **Exodus 12:11**, ¹¹ 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste-- it is the LORD'S Passover.'" (They were even to roast the whole animal like a nomadic shepherd might do...12:8-10. They were to eat unleavened bread...12:39... because they wouldn't have time to let the yeast rise.) The picture is one of readiness. When the opportunity presents itself to get out we must be prepared to GET OUT. Don't hesitate. We're going to take communion on our way out. There is a battle waiting for us but, "Do not fear. Stand, and see the salvation of the LORD."