

CHAPTER 6

The Exodus Paradigm

We cannot fully understand the implications of the New Testament if we do not have a grounding in the Old Testament because the Old Testament is the basis for New Testament revelation. That is why it is very important that we become familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures: Not only did God base New Testament revelation on the Old Testament, He based later writings in the Old Testament on earlier writings. When you read the prophets, they speak of future events in terms of past activities and certain things that God did in the early days of man's history that became part of the prophetic vision. For example, the idea of "the garden," from that first Garden of Eden, becomes a repetitive theme in Scripture and a picture of what God will do for his people. "The flood" becomes a repetitive picture of God's judgment. "The Egyptian captivity," in

particular, becomes a paradigm of God's salvation purposes. This is true all the way through the Word of God. It is true in the prophets, in the whole New Testament, and particularly in the Book of Revelation. Revelation is jam-packed full of Old Testament stories, references, and allusions. It is full of all that God has done in the past, but it brings it right up to date, declaring that what God has done, He is still doing and He will yet do.

I have mentioned more than once that this book really is a book about the first century. In fact, many times it talks about things that "must soon take place" or are "about to take place" (see Rev. 1:1,19; 22:6; see also 2:16; 3:11; 11:4; 22:7,12,20), and when John wrote that down, under the dictation of Jesus, he was not thinking that "soon" meant in 2,000 years time. There was an immediacy to these prophecies that was understood by the first-generation believers who could see it being fulfilled in their day as God shook off unrepentant and covenant-breaking Israel. But as we have said, what God has done is a picture of what God is doing and is going to do. What John is writing about is both a fulfillment of prophecy and a prophetic declaration of things yet to happen.

There are many hints, visions, and glimpses in the Book of Revelation of the Exodus era—perhaps more than of any other period in Old Testament history. The Exodus becomes, to the prophets, a picture of God's redemptive purposes. That helps us to understand the very crux of the Book of Revelation. It is not just a book of punishment, of judgment, of God's wrath being poured out onto a wayward world. It is a redemptive book. It is a book about a God who saves, delivers, and redeems his people. So in this chapter we

will consider several episodes where Exodus is revisited in the Book of Revelation.

Sacrifice

The first thing that we need to realize is the similarity between Exodus and Revelation, in terms of the sacrifice God made. When he is bringing greetings from Jesus and the Father and the seven spirits, John tells us about Jesus that He has "*freed us from our sins by His blood*" (Rev. 1:5). This is a very deliberate choice of words. The implication is that sin was bondage, imprisonment, slavery, and that we are freed by Jesus' blood. This is a great and wonderful truth. God did not just forgive your sin. He freed you from it! Some versions say that He "*separated us from our sin.*" That is what God has done, and if believers could understand the implications of that, many of them would not live the powerless lives that they are leading. In the Old Testament, all the blood of sacrifice could do was to cover and forgive your sin; it could not deal with the power of sin. It dealt with the penalty, but it had no influence over the power. Men could find sacrifice that took away their sins, but not sacrifice that could keep them from sinning. So a man would go into the temple, make his sacrifice, be pronounced forgiven, and go back into a hostile environment that almost immediately led him to sin again.

When Abraham took Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him, Isaac was an astute young man. He was not a boy; he was probably in his late teens or early twenties. He could have fought against the man who was over 100 years old and overcome him, but he himself was very submissive. He had the same faith that his father had. He believed in resurrection. At least he did when

he got there, but to begin with, he was not sure what was going on. He had the wood on the shoulder as he ascended the hill, and we can imagine him saying to his dad, "Father, we have got the wood and the knife and the fire, but where is the lamb?" And that question has echoed all the way down through history: "Where is the lamb? Where is the lamb that can deliver us from sin?" Abraham's response was that God would provide a lamb. There was a longing and an expectation from that moment on for a lamb that God would provide.

As you know, when God came down to deliver His people, to set them free from Egyptian bondage, He did it by the blood of a lamb. Each household was to have its sacrificial lamb. That is why we can say with confidence that when we preach the Gospel, we declare good news "to you and your house": our expectation should be whole household conversions. We believe that salvation took place household by household, a lamb for each house. They had to take the lamb, by the way, into their home so that sacrificing it would be a painful operation: Here was a lamb that had lived as one of the family! Here was a lamb that had lived like a cuddly pet in the house, and now its throat was to be cut, its blood to be shed and put on the lintels and the doorposts. But it was the blood of a lamb that would set them free, that would separate them from the powers of darkness and the cruelty of the Egyptian taskmasters. It was the lamb that would open the door out of slavery and bring them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This was a lamb that would free them from their slavery and their oppression. They came out by the blood of a lamb. God said, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*" (Exod. 12:13).

When the tabernacle and temple system of sacrifice was initiated, there were many sacrifices, but the Israelites knew even then that the blood of bulls or goats could not take away sin (see Ps. 40:6; 51:16-17). They were still crying in their hearts, "Where is the lamb?" and the prophet Isaiah, under the anointing of God, spoke of a lamb, dumb before his shearers. He spoke of a lamb that bore our sicknesses and carried our infirmities, by whose stripes we would be healed (see Isa. 53:4-7). He spoke about Jesus. Many years later, in the middle of a desert, a eunuch read this prophecy about the suffering lamb. He asked Philip, "Is he talking about himself or somebody else?" Then, beginning at that very Scripture, Philip told him about Jesus. Every sacrifice in the Old Testament had pointed to Jesus. Every sacrificial lamb was a forerunner of the Lamb of God.

Jesus describes John the Baptist as someone who is more than a prophet (see Matt. 11:9). That is a very elevated place to occupy, for the prophets were great men, anointed servants of God. But Jesus said that John was more than a prophet. Why? When you read about John, you discover two interesting things. Firstly, he only had one sermon. All he ever said was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And secondly, the Scripture tells us clearly and distinctly that John did no miracles. He had no miracles and one sermon! And yet Jesus said that he was the most important of them all. He was most important for this reason: it falls to John, in that long line of prophetic ministries that prophesied of things to come, to stand by the roadside, see Jesus coming, point to Him, and say: "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29). All the way down through history they

had been crying, "Where is the lamb?" and John comes and declares, "Here is the Lamb!" The greatest ministry that we can fulfill is simply to point people to the Lamb. The Book of Revelation points us to the Lamb: the elders tell John that "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah...has triumphed,*" and John turns and looks and declares "*I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain*" (Rev. 5:5-6). He is standing there as our Passover sacrifice because it is his blood that frees us from our sin and as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: "*Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*" (1 Cor. 5:7).

The favorite title that John uses for Jesus throughout the Book of Revelation is "the Lamb." What the Book of Revelation does is to take us back to the great deliverance that God wrought for us by the sacrifice that He made through the blood of the Lamb. Not only did His blood free us from our sin, it purchased us for God. So you and I now belong exclusively to God. We are not our own. We are bought with a price.

Salvation Secured

Not only did Jesus make sacrifice for us, but He secured salvation for us. It is not necessarily the same thing. Do you know you can be born again and not saved? You can come to Jesus, repent, and believe on Him, but then be a slave of fear. You can be a Christian, have your name written in the Book of Life, but then be a slave to unbreakable habits. You can be born again but not saved from things that defile, that imprison, and that bind you. I am not talking about being ensnared by demons or inhabited by fallen powers, but I am talking about being under the influence of things outside of

yourself that cause you to be a prisoner. Christ frees you. The great ministry of Jesus was to declare liberty to the captives.

It is an interesting thing that, although Israel was rescued from Egypt by the blood of the lamb, Pharaoh pursued them. He had animosity in his heart towards the people of God. Scripture speaks of Pharaoh as a shadowy type of the dragon, and of the beast out of the sea, so he could not help but feel animosity in his heart against the woman and the seed of the woman. He had to follow his nature and inclination. He could not let the people go. He had to pursue them and seek to destroy them. We have seen in the twelfth chapter of Revelation that the dragon is seeking to destroy the woman and her child, but the child is caught up into the heavens and satan is cast down out of the heavens. Then it tells us:

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach (Revelation 12:13-14).

The devil pursues the seed of the woman, but God rescues her. In one commentary I have read on this particular passage, the author maintains that the wings of a great eagle obviously represent the United States Air Force, and there is coming a time when the godly power of America will rescue Jews from their persecution and airlift them into the desert regions of America and Canada that are as yet unoccupied but have been reserved for a Jewish people to find relief from physical opposition. And he was serious! This is stuff that is put forward as a

serious interpretation of this Scripture. But is it true? Is the eagle with wings a picture of the United States Air Force? Or is there something else in Scripture that would help us understand what is going on here? Let us go back to the Exodus incident and see what God says about His people:

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself (Exodus 19:4).

God rescued Israel on eagles' wings. And the prophet Isaiah tells us that he will do the same for us:

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (Isaiah 40:31).

God moves to lift us up out of our despair, our captivity and our oppression under the power of the evil one. God is committed to our utter salvation and our total liberty. He has committed Himself to that. He lifts us up on eagles' wings.

This is a wonderful picture that we find again in Deuteronomy, where it is especially interesting:

In a desert land He found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; He guarded him as the apple of His eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him (Deuteronomy 32:10-12).

The interesting thing about this particular Scripture is that some of the words are almost exactly the words that Moses uses to describe the creation, when the Spirit of God hovered over the deep. Just as the initial creation is described as barren and empty, so too is the wilderness where God found his people and hovered over them. Just as the great eagle Spirit of God hovered over the deep and, out of the darkness and void, brought forth creation in all its glory, so God now hovers over a people to cause them to become a new creation. Jesus used a similar image when He stood up, looked at the city, and said, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing*" (Matt. 23:37).

God secures us from all the power of the enemy, from the visitations of judgment, and from all the power of Egypt, by lifting us out of it all on wings like eagles, by taking us to a place where we will be cared for, where we are not abandoned, not deserted in the desert, not left to wander in the wilderness, but taken care of, fed, watered, equipped, and strengthened. God cares for us, and God moves on our behalf to secure our salvation just as He led His people through the wilderness.

Safety Guaranteed

In the Book of Revelation, the dragon pursues the woman spewing out rivers of water in order to carry her away in the flood. But God keeps her safe. In fact, it tells us that the earth helps the woman (see Rev. 12:16). We need to understand that the earth is on our side. It is God's earth, and therefore it is His servant, and it does His will. Note that the

earth opens its mouth and swallows the river that could have destroyed the woman.

Consider what happened when Israel was in the wilderness, when there arose among the people a rebellion led by Korah. Very often that which arises internally is far more deadly than that which attacks us from outside. The foe within is more to be feared than the foe without. Now Korah felt that he should be at least the equal of Moses, believing that God had made the whole congregation holy and that they were therefore all priests. He wanted to do what was reserved for the Aaronic priesthood. This was a rebellion and a challenge, and God made it very clear that He would not abide challenges to His authority, nor rebellion against those whom He has raised up in leadership. And so the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed what would have become a river of corruption that would have destroyed not only what God wanted to do in, for, and through His people, but also the ability of God's people to fulfill His purposes—all this before they ever got into the land.

Now we saw how the dragon is associated with the waters when we were considering the beast that came up out of the sea, and we saw how Rahab, the great Egyptian king, was also identified with that beast. Here, then, we are seeing the dragon using the weapons of his warfare, spewing out waters that are geared to destroying God's people.

Although not speaking directly of the Exodus, but about the situation in his own time and generation, the prophet speaks in these terms and prophetically applies it in every generation: "*I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams*" (Ezek. 29:3).

And this is the dragon, Pharaoh, sending forth his streams to destroy the church of Christ and being utterly frustrated. God has lifted us out of his reach and opened the earth so that his violence is dissipated and comes to no effect.

One of the things that is revisited in the Book of Revelation has to do with the sentences that He passed on that nation. The plagues that we find in the Book of Revelation are almost an action replay of the plagues that were experienced in Egypt. This is one of the ways that God communicates to us that history is prophetic. The judgments that He poured down on Egypt were not just on the Egyptians but on the gods of Egypt, to break their power and to release His people, and these are the very things that are reenacted in the Book of Revelation.

The first of the bowls of wrath is poured out on the land and produces ugly and painful sores, matching the fifth plague on Egypt, which was festering boils. The second bowl of wrath is poured out onto the sea, and the sea becomes blood; that was the first plague that Moses called down on Egypt, turning the waters of the Nile to blood. The third is like it, wrath on rivers and springs, and they, too, turn to blood. The fourth is wrath on the sun, bringing intense heat; we do not find any obvious equivalent to this one in the plagues poured on Egypt. The next, though, is wrath on the throne of the beast, bringing darkness and plague; this is the eighth plague of Exodus, where darkness comes on the whole nation except on the place where the people of God are living. The sixth bowl is wrath on the river Euphrates, and the river Euphrates dries up; this is a kind of reversal of the miracle of the Red Sea, for the Red Sea was dried up for God's people to pass over, but now the Euphrates is dried up for the enemies

to come. As the Euphrates dries up, foul frog spirits come to deceive the whole world, just as in the second plague on Egypt frogs came up and covered the land. The seventh bowl is wrath poured out on the air resulting in lightning, thunder, earthquake, and a great hailstorm, which was the sixth plague that God sent down on the Egyptians.

It is easy to see the parallels. God's plagues are coming on nations that are disobedient. The other Exodus plagues, those of gnats and flies, are surely seen again in those locusts that we considered in an earlier chapter, who come flying out of the pit, an airborne pestilence, flying demons who come to terrify and overcome those who are the enemies of God. So we find these terrible Egyptian plagues and visitations being reenacted first of all on unrepentant, covenant-breaking Israel, but then upon all people who rebel against God in their hearts. We must remember, of course, that these are pictures, symbols, and signs, not literal visitations.

It is important to note that if you put the trumpets and the bowls next to each other, you will find that they are the same things seen from a different angle. For instance, the first trumpet and the first bowl have to do with the earth. The second trumpet and the second bowl have to do with the sea. The third trumpet and bowl have to do with rivers and springs. The fourth of each have to do with the lights in the heavens. The fifth have to do with either creatures coming out of the abyss or God darkening and afflicting the throne of the beast. The sixth in both have to do with the river Euphrates, and the seventh have to do with the earthquake, manifestations of God's power, and voices from Heaven. There is a repetition with increased intensity.

I should also point out that the sevens in Revelation are almost always divided into the first four and the remaining three. Let us look at the first four, because these have to do with humanity and the last three usually have to do with demon powers. When the angels pour out their judgments on the earth, it affects the comfort of men and women. It disrupts their lifestyle and spoils the place where they live. It interrupts their comfort and confidence. Hail, fire, and blood are poured out from the sky. When the sea is affected, it does not just affect the creatures that live in the sea, but rather the maritime enterprises of the world. It is a picture of commerce being affected. When the rivers and springs are being focused upon, it is sign that human satisfaction and contentment are being affected, for these are the things that give us life. The Bible says that all our springs of joy are in Zion. We read that there is a river whose springs make glad the city of God. But here are rivers and springs that are defiled, and the contentment that is experienced in life is suddenly gone. Then, when the sun, the moon, and the stars are darkened and men cannot see by their light, confidence has gone, and confusion has come because they can no longer see clearly or understand properly.

So when these things come on the earth, we are not looking for literal buckets of blood to come falling out of the sky (see Rev. 8:7). Rather, we are seeing the fulfillment of the statement of the Israelites at the time of Jesus' arrest, when they said, "*Let His blood be on us*" (Matt. 27:25; see also Ps. 7:16). It is now figuratively coming upon their heads, and their comfort is being removed. God interferes with the commerce of godless men as He destroys the trading fleets of the nations.

God deals with that sense of contentment and well-being in the human heart as rivers that once were sparkling streams of satisfaction are now turned to putrefying blood. God affects men's confidence and ability to see and to understand and to make right decisions as He brings darkness where once there was light. These are the things that God does and that the plagues speak to us of. It is to shake the confidence of those who are affected by them. It is to make them aware that things are not well and that if they had any sense at all, they would seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near.

Singers of Songs

The fourth thing that is very important for us to understand relates to the song that they sing. In the fifteenth chapter of Revelation, we see a sea of glass mixed with fire. Now if you were to see a sea of glass mixed with fire, it would look like a red sea. Beside the sea were those who had been victorious over the beast just as Israel came through the Red Sea and was free of the beast of Egypt. They sang a song, the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Those who came through the Red Sea were led in song by Moses:

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

"I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea" (Exodus 15:1).

We sing the same song, the song of Moses and of the Lamb, because we have been through the Red Sea. We have all been baptized into Jesus in the sea and in the cloud. We have all

been made to drink of the same spiritual drink (see 1 Cor. 10:1-4). We are God's redeemed and spirit-filled people.

It is the same for us with the sustenance they received. God promised this to Moses: "I will rain down bread from Heaven for you." God is the God who supplies all of our needs. He is the God who is committed to our well-being. He is committed to supply miraculously when natural abilities have failed. God fed His people through the wilderness, and Jesus says to one of the churches in Revelation, "*To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna*" (Rev. 2:17). We feast upon the same bread of Heaven. We eat angels' food in the pilgrimage upon which God has sent us forth. Just as Israel in the wilderness was fed again and again, so we are always fed the bread of Heaven. Jesus said, "*The bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world. . . . I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry*" (see John 6:25-35). We feast on Him in our hearts and are filled with His goodness.

In Exodus, God said, "*I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God*" (Exod. 29:45). That is part of the covenant statement. But here God is saying, "I will dwell among them." He pitched His tent right where they were. Israel lived in tents. That is why they celebrated the Feast of Booths. They lived in tents in all their journeying through the wilderness, and so did God. God camped with them. The Book of Revelation declares, "*The dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God*" (Rev. 21:3). That was prefigured with God in the presence of His people in the wilderness, and now he is with us in power, for "*They are before the throne of God and serve*

Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst" (Rev. 7:15-16).

There are people who serve Him day and night. The Scripture says, "You will be for Me a kingdom of priests" (Exod. 19:6). Well, we have already seen that that is the very status that we occupy. We are God's Exodus people. We are God's true Israel. We are those among whom He dwells and who are called to serve Him. What God has done, God will yet do, and if you feel yourself imprisoned, captured, chained, or restricted, then there is a God who will set you free. There is blood that has been shed that frees you from sin. If you are under pressure, then there are wings that will lift you, for God is with us and God is our Savior. If you are hungry, there is bread from Heaven, hidden manna, that will sustain you, water from the rock that will refresh you, for that which was "natural" has in Christ become a spiritual reality.