

## Christmas Unwrapped “The Second Exodus” Matthew 2:13-18

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] 2008 has been a hard year. The mortgage meltdown. The collapse of the housing market. Wall Street icons going belly up. Now it's the big three, Detroit automakers, in need of government bailout. It's interesting, in fashion world, because of the economic doom and gloom of this year, there's a prediction that cheerful and sunny yellow will be the influential color of 2009. Pantone, the global authority on color and provider of professional color standards for the design industries, specifically cites "mimosa," a vibrant shade of yellow...as its top shade of the new year. There you have it. For 2009, yellow is the new black.

### Transition

Turn to Matthew 2:13-18. For fifteen hundred years the nation of Israel lived with the same style. Moses. Mosaic law. Mosaic covenant. He was the national hero. It was all Moses all the time. Moses this. Moses that. Moses, Moses, Moses. 24/7. Do you know what Matthew says starting in verse 13? [Slide #2]

### Proposition

- **Jesus is the new Moses who leads God's people out of slavery**
- Matthew is intentionally making a theological point about who Jesus is right here. He's indicating a major shift in trends. The birth of Christ marks something new. Yellow is the new black. Jesus is the new Moses. Out with the old. In with the new. Part of what it means to unwrap Christmas means unwrapping the idea that **Jesus is the new Moses who leads God's people out of slavery.**

### Transition

In the two paragraphs we are going to look at this morning Matthew cites...

### Organizational Sentence

- **Two Old Testament quotations to support his claim that Jesus is the new Moses**

### Background/Setting

- We know the story of Israel. Jacob, renamed Israel by God, has twelve sons. The favorite, Joseph, is sold into slavery by his brothers. Through the providence of God Joseph winds up in Egypt, in prison, and then second in command in Egypt behind Pharaoh himself. Famine hits that region of the world. The nations are drawn to Egypt for food and Joseph is the one who wisely doles out grain to keep people alive. Israel and his sons, Joseph's brothers, also find their way to Egypt looking for bread. They end up staying and making a home there. Years go by.
- Exodus 1:6 picks up the story. *Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, 7 but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them. 8 Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. 9 "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too*

numerous for us. 10 Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." 11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites 13 and worked them ruthlessly. 14 They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

- The nation of Israel winds up in slavery. But God raises Moses up to deliver the Israelites out of Pharaoh's hand, leading them out of Egypt and out of slavery. God's deliverance through Moses becomes the Israel's national identity. Who's Israel? Oh, yeah, they're the ones God delivered out of Egypt. The plagues. The sea split open. The pillar of fire by night. The cloud by day. And Matthew uses this deliverance through Moses as the backdrop for what he says about Jesus in this passage. **Jesus is the new Moses who leads God's people out of slavery.**

### Transition

Look at [verse 13-15](#). The first paragraph, verses 13-15, contains Matthew's [first](#) Old Testament quote. Remember, [two Old Testament quotations](#) to support his claim that **Jesus is the new Moses**. Hosea 11:1. *"Out of Egypt I called my son."* Listen. *When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."*

### Main Points

- Matthew's point is that, like Moses who led God's people out of slavery, Jesus will one day do the same. Matthew applies Hosea 11:1 to Jesus. He is the **new Moses who leads God's people out of slavery.**
- Let me show you how Matthew sets all this up. [Verse 13](#). *When they had gone*, in other words, after the Magi left Joseph and Mary, *an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream*. For the second time now Joseph is visited by an angel in a dream and he's given a command. *"Get up,"* the angel said, *"take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."*
- Herod was obviously threatened by the birth of the *one born King of the Jews*. Herod is suspicious. He's paranoid. He's a maniacal nut job. And the threat to Jesus' life is real. And so God takes sovereign action to protect Jesus and get him to Egypt just like God providentially orchestrated the circumstances to get Israel to Egypt. Why? Because **Jesus is the new Moses**. He's going to do what Moses did except on a bigger and grander scale.
- God sends an angel to command Joseph and Mary to take Jesus to Egypt in order to escape Herod's wrath. It was natural for them to flee to Egypt. It was a stable country. It was close; only about 75 miles from Bethlehem. And most importantly, Herod had no authority there. Jesus would be safe in Egypt.

- Verse 14. So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." The events of the Magi, the dream, Herod's madness, the flight to Egypt are all used by Matthew to set up this theological statement about who Jesus is from Hosea 11:1. Turn to Hosea 11.
- Hosea, as a book, is about God's love for his people. Even in Israel's unfaithfulness God still loves. Chapter 11 is no different. You see this love coming out in verses 3-4. *It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. 4 I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.* You see it in verse 8. *"How can I give you up, Ephraim? And verse 9. I will not carry out my fierce anger nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim.* In other words, God loves Israel with an unending, never ending love. And that love for Israel, Hosea says, is best demonstrated by an event in Israel's infancy. Hosea 11:1. *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.* Hosea, looking back on the history of Israel, pictures Israel as a son, a child, with God demonstrating his great love for Israel by rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> *"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*
- Matthew takes this verse from Hosea about God's love for his "son" Israel and applies it to Jesus. "It is baby Jesus' return from Egypt, after the original flight from Herod, that matches Hosea's declaration that God's son has been called out of Egypt."<sup>2</sup> What Matthew seems to be saying, prepping us for the rest of what he will say about Jesus in his Gospel, is that through Jesus, the new Moses, [Slide #3] God will love us with an everlasting love. *"Out of Egypt I called my son."* In other words, God loved Israel with an everlasting love when he delivered them from slavery in Egypt God says. And, Matthew says, God will do the same through Jesus except on an infinitely bigger and grander scale. He will love us with an everlasting love; he'll prove that love by freeing us from slavery.
- Understanding this is what it means to unwrap Christmas. As much as anything else Christmas is about freedom from bondage. However, our slavery is different than Israel's slavery. Theirs was physical. Ours is spiritual. The Bible says that sin is bondage. Sin is slavery. Galatians 4:3 says it like this. *So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.* To follow the world, to do what the world says, to live the way the world says we should live is to be in bondage.
- And you see this all the time. People, friends, neighbors, even some of you are caught in certain patterns of behavior, helpless to change. Whenever you say to yourself, "I know I shouldn't do this" but do it anyway you prove what God says about sin being bondage. It's slavery.
- The promise of Christmas is that the birth of Christ signals the beginning of the end of our enslavement to sin. That's what Matthew is hinting at in part here. We are to expect Jesus to do something like what Moses did. Christ, by his life and death, leads us on a second exodus out of slavery. Romans 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 7

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 7

- God is asking you to see, in Christmas, his wonderful, everlasting love that culminates in your freedom from sin. That is Christmas unwrapped.

### Transition

Look at [verses 16-18](#). I want you to see from this second paragraph the second Old Testament quotation Matthew uses to demonstrate that **Jesus is the new Moses who leads God's people out of slavery**. Listen. *When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: 18 "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*

- Before we get to the quote, which comes from Jeremiah 31:15, I want you to notice the parallels between Jesus and Moses. Don't these verses bring to mind the events of Exodus 1 and Moses?
- Flip back to Exodus 1 and let's revisit Israel's story in Egypt. We left off reading [verse 14](#). Look at verse 15. *They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly. The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 16 "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." 17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. 18 Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" 19 The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." 20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own. 22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."*
- *Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, 2 and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. 5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. 7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" 8 "Yes, go," she answered. And the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."*
- So when Matthew tells us in [verse 16](#) that Herod gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem two years old and under what are we meant to remember? Exodus 1 and 2 and Moses. "Like

Moses rescued from the edict to kill the Israelites' baby boys, Jesus is spared from the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem."<sup>3</sup> Matthew is telling us that **Jesus is the new Moses who leads God's people out of slavery.**

- All this leads Matthew to say in **verse 18** that these events fulfill what was said through the prophet Jeremiah. Specifically Jeremiah 31:15. *"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*
- Turn to Jeremiah 31. The intriguing thing about Matthew's use of Jeremiah 31 is that it has nothing to do with the Exodus. Jeremiah 31 is about another low point in Israel's history, the exile. Most likely Jeremiah 31:15 refers to the weeping for those being carted off and deported to Babylon in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar invaded the southern kingdom of Judah. Rachel, Israel's favorite wife, is idealized as the mother of all Israelites. She mourns for her children who are taken to Ramah, a town 6 miles north of Jerusalem, a stopping point on the road to exile.
- So why, if Matthew is trying to make the point that Jesus is the new Moses, does he refer to Jeremiah and the exile—not the Exodus? Answer? Because of the broader context of Jeremiah 31. Beyond leading the Israelites out of Egypt what is Moses known for? The Ten Commandments. The Mosaic covenant. The broader context of Jeremiah 31 is the promise of a new covenant.
- In fact, the chapter starts out with this great promise. Jeremiah 31:1 *"At that time," declares the LORD, "I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they will be my people."* God may scatter his people by exiling them to Babylon but the weeping and mourning for the exiles is only temporary. God will bring Israel back to the land and make a new covenant with them. Jeremiah 31:31-33. *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."*
- In other words, the tears associated with 31:15, the verse quoted by Matthew, are a blip on the screen. The tears are a minor part of the chapter that is predominantly a chapter of hope. And in the slaughter of the boys of Bethlehem? Tragic? Yes. But a blip on the screen. Matthew sees in this tragedy great hope. [Slide #4] The boy Christ will one day, like Moses, **usher in a new covenant.** A completely different kind of covenant; nothing like the one God made with his people through Moses, a covenant written on tablets of stone. God will write this new covenant on the heart. Jeremiah 31:33. *"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.* Matthew is prepping us for the rest of the story. "The heir to David's throne has come, the Exile is over, the true Son of God has arrived, and he will introduce the new covenant promised by Jeremiah."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 7

<sup>4</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, Expositors Bible Commentary.

- Do you see what Matthew is trying to do here? He's intentionally making a theological point about Jesus. He's indicating a major shift in trends. The birth of Christ marks something new. Yellow is the new black. Jesus most certainly is the new Moses. This is Christmas unwrapped.

### **Conclusion**

- [Slide #5] The story is told of a little girl who came home from Sunday school waving a paper for her mother to see. "Look Mommy," she exclaimed, "Teacher says I drew the most unusual Christmas picture she ever saw!" Her mother took one look and had to agree with the teacher. Hoping her daughter could explain her creation, the mother asked, "Why are all these people riding in the back of an airplane?" "Well, Mommy, that's the flight into Egypt." Accepting her daughter's answer, mother asked another question: "Who is this mean-looking man in the front?" Her daughter answered quickly and knowingly: "That's Pontius, the Pilot." Looking at the picture even more closely, the mother said, "I see you have Mary and Joseph and the baby. But who is the large man sitting behind Mary?" "Can't you tell?" the little girl asked, beginning to shake her head in disappointment. "That's Round John Virgin."<sup>5</sup>
- What's your picture of Christmas? Does your sketch of Christmas have any resemblance to God's picture? Or have you just patched things together and come up with your own ideas of what Christmas is all about? This week, on this homestretch run to the big day, what would it mean for you to unwrap God's gift? Freedom from slavery to sin and the hope of a new covenant. That's God's gift for you. What a shame it would for Christmas to slip by without you opening his gift.

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<sup>5</sup> Submitted to preachingtoday.com by John Beukema, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania