

The Way Out: A New Exodus

Luke 9:28-36 [Read]

A week before these events took place, Jesus revealed to His disciples that he was the Christ, the long-expected Messiah of Israel.

Then he stunned them by telling them that when Israel's spiritual leaders learned that he had said this, they would seize Him, torture Him and kill Him.

But, he added, after three days he would be raised from the dead to new life.

As they were trying to absorb all this, he added this promise: *"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

Six days later, Jesus made good on that promise.

He took three of his disciples up on a mountain and revealed to them that he was not only the Messiah; *he was God Himself, clothed in human flesh.*

In addition to showing them his Godly nature, he allowed them to hear Him speaking with Moses and Elijah—two men who loomed like giants in the history of Israel.

Moses was the great Lawgiver of Israel and Elijah was regarded as the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets.

The rabbis considered the two of them so important that they sometimes referred to the Old Testament as *"Moses and Elijah"*—the Law and the Prophets.

But what was more important than the appearance of the two men was what they were discussing.

They were talking about Jesus' **exodus which he was about to bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem.**

A new Exodus!

It was in the original Exodus that Israel had been born.

God had formed a nation for Himself by delivering His people out of slavery in Egypt amidst great signs and wonders.

It was in the original *Exodus* that God had sheltered his people from the angel of death through the blood of a lamb—the Passover lamb.

It was in the original that *Exodus*, God had given his people a body of Law which showed them how to live according to his will, including a system of sacrifices through which He would forgive their sins when they failed to do so.

It was in the original *Exodus* that God had given His people the tabernacle, a church where He would physically dwell among them as they wandered through the wilderness of Sinai.

It was in the original *Exodus* that God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by giving their descendants a land of their own, a land of milk and honey.

And now Jesus was going to lead God's people in a new Exodus!

It would begin in Jerusalem amidst great signs and wonders, just as the original *Exodus* had begun in Egypt.

Rocks would split, the sky would turn dark and the dead would rise from their graves and walk.

Once again, God would provide a Passover lamb who would shield God's people from death—a Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

Just as Moses had set God's people free from slavery to Pharaoh, Jesus would set God's people free from slavery to the Prince of this world.

He would provide a way out of this valley of death we call the world.

For make no mistake, this world **is** a valley of death.

Of course it doesn't seem like a valley of death; it seems like a garden of earthly delights.

It is so appealing that it seduced and corrupted the judgment of the wisest man who ever lived: a king by the name of Solomon.

Solomon started out on the right path.

When he succeeded his father, David, to the throne of Israel he was very young and He prayed earnestly to the Lord to grant him wisdom to govern the great kingdom he had inherited.

The Lord was so pleased with Solomon's prayer, that he not only gave him divine wisdom, He showered him with many other gifts as well.

And things went well with Solomon and with Israel—for awhile.

But somewhere along the line, Solomon turned away from the divine wisdom God had given him and began to pursue worldly fame and glory by focusing his efforts on building an empire.

In the course of building this empire he ignored laws God had laid down for all Israelites.

In *Deuteronomy*, God had warned the Israelites through Moses: "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going or they will be a snare among you. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.... And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same."

But instead of cleansing the land of pagan religion as God had commanded, Solomon allowed pagan worship to thrive while he went about his empire-building.

In ancient times, kings ratified military alliances and commercial treaties with foreign kings by taking the daughters of those kings as their wives, or by having their sons take them as wives

God had expressly forbidden His people to do this, but Solomon ignored God's prohibition.

He not only married foreign wives, he allowed them to import their pagan religions into Israel and teach them to the Israelites.

In his lust for worldly fame and glory, Solomon forsook the wisdom God had given him.

The result was that by the end of his life Solomon had sunk into despair.

We have his own testimony to this in his in the *Book of Ecclesiastes* which reads like a road map to despair.

Having rejected God's wisdom, Solomon looked for wisdom in this world.

He searched for meaning in life in "all that is done under the sun."

But all he found was meaninglessness.

Here are his own words:

"Meaningless! Meaningless! Says the Teacher. Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!

"What a great burden God has laid on men! I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is twisted cannot be straightened, what is lacking cannot be counted....For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief."

Paul's words in *Romans* could serve as Solomon's epitaph: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness...For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools....They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator...."

As the *Proverb* says, "Fools die for lack of wisdom."

When Solomon abandoned his relationship with God he was left with only an entropic world where all things are subject to decay and death.

Sadly, most of the Kings of Israel and Judah who came after Solomon followed in his path.

God had promised them that if they followed His Commands they would be blessed, but that if they ignored them they would be cursed.

But like Solomon, most of them sought worldly glory rather than God.

And by their example, they encouraged their subjects to do the same.

The result was that having cut herself off from God Israel sank under the weight of her sins.

Finally God abandoned the temple of Jerusalem where he had dwelt, leaving it to the cruelties of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who tore it down, stone by stone, and hauled the people of Jerusalem off as prisoners of war.

In the horror of this event we can discern the power and magnitude of sin.

If the wisest man who ever lived can be seduced and corrupted by the prince of this world—what about us?

How vulnerable are we?

Vulnerable indeed, because *sin is not only a matter of what we do; sin is a matter of what, down deep, we are.*

And without God's help, we cannot be other than what we are.

But God has provided a way out!

A way out of idolatry and the despair and death to which it leads.

God has sent His Son to lead His people in a New Exodus!

To show us how we can escape from slavery to the prince of this world and from idolatry and despair and death.

Just as Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt while death rained down all around them, God has sent a new and greater Moses to lead us out of the Egyptian darkness of this world while death rains down all around us.

We too will experience physical death, but for us it is no longer a thing to be feared.

In fact it will not feel like death at all; it will feel more like a change in location.

One minute we will be mowing the lawn and the next second we will be in heaven with Jesus where we will bask in His love forever, because in the New Exodus, death has no power over us.

As Shakespeare wrote, *"...death once dead, there's no more dying then."*

And this brings us to the last great blessing of the New Exodus.

During the First Exodus, God dwelt among the Israelites in the tabernacle he had them build and carry with them.

And that tabernacle ultimately was replaced by the temple in Jerusalem.

But God destroyed both of those dwelling places because they were only models of the real temple, the heavenly temple he had planned to send all along.

The temple which is His Son.

It is in Jesus Christ that the children of the New Exodus find their new tabernacle which goes with them wherever they journey in the wilderness of this world.

Jesus is our alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end of our life.

In Him are the sacrifices, the journey, the way, the truth and the life.

In Him, the Kingdom has come, just as he promised his disciples.

After all is said and done, it all boils down to Jesus.

Just Jesus.

Amen.

