

4-1-2013

"Speaking of His Exodus": A Reading on the Exodus and the Gospel

Lee Magness
jlmagness@milligan.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven>

Recommended Citation

Magness, Lee (2013) "'Speaking of His Exodus": A Reading on the Exodus and the Gospel," *Leaven*: Vol. 21: Iss. 2, Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol21/iss2/12>

This Liturgical Readings is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leaven by an authorized editor of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu.

“Speaking of His Exodus”

A Reading on the Exodus and the Gospel

Lee Magness

This reading combines quotations from the life of Jesus with poetic reflections on the interpenetration of the Exodus saga with the Gospel story. The best presentation is probably the simplest, with one reader wording the italicized gospel and a second reader reciting the reflection.

1

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The gospel is a journey, a Jesus journey,

the gospel is a journey, a wilderness journey,

an Exodus, a way out, Lord-led,

strangely straight for the way it winds through the wilderness.

2

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,

*Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you;
for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.*

*Then he got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt,
and remained there until the death of Herod.*

*This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet,
Out of Egypt I have called my son.*

The gospel is a journey, a flight to Egypt, a flight from Egypt,

the land of escape, the land of entrapment,

from one Joseph to another, kings slaughter and enslave:

Out of Egypt I have called my son.

3

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,

proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

And he declared, Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The journey of Jesus was a wilderness journey,

beginning at a baptism, led by a lamb,

a slain lamb, a bloody-doored lamb, passing over from death to life—

one way out, in, through the blood of the lamb.

4

*And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from out of the water,
suddenly the skies were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove
and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said,
This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.*

The journey of Jesus was a wilderness journey,
beginning as a baptism, saved through the riven sea,
submerged in the river, seeing through the ripped sky a cloudy Spirit,
coming up the Chosen one, coming out the beloved Son.

5

*And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness.
He fasted forty days and nights and afterwards he was famished.
The tempter came and said to him,
If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.
But he answered, It is written, One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

The journey of Jesus was a wilderness journey, a casting out,
forty days like forty years of wandering, wondering,
making manna at the first sign of famine, or not,
knowing exiles do not survive on signs or stones.

6

*He said to them, Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.
Now many saw them going and hurried there on foot.
And he saw a great crowd and had compassion for them,
because they were like sheep without a shepherd,
and he began to teach them many things.*

Jesus led them to the wilderness, a way out, a way away,
reminding them of rest, Sabbath rest,
them like wandering sheep, him like a shepherd,
famished himself, but feeding, always feeding.

7

*When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said,
Send them away so they may buy something for themselves to eat.
But he answered, You give them something to eat.
He blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people.
And all ate and were filled.*

The journey of Jesus was a wilderness journey, deep in the wilderness of want,
want of sustenance, want of compassion, folding the flock,
filling them with what they didn't want, and more,
the gift of giving others what they unknowingly need.

8

When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land.

*When he saw that they were straining against an adverse wind,
he came towards them in the morning, walking on the sea.*

They were terrified, but he said, Take heart, it is I; don't be afraid.

Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased.

The journey of Jesus was a wild journey, across a wide and windy sea,
walking through the walls of waves,
his followers frightened, hurrying through the hurricane,
pursued by a presence with which they were finally at peace.

9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses.

They appeared in glory and were speaking of his exodus.

A cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him.

The journey of Jesus was a mountain journey.
There like Sinai his face glowed, and there like Sinai he was cloud-covered,
and there like Sinai Moses lip-synched his leave-taking,
and there like Sinai, God thundered, This is my Chosen.

10

Then they brought the colt to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

As he rode along, the people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.

The whole multitude of disciples began to praise God joyfully, saying,

Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

As he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.

The journey of Jesus was a mountain journey,
mounting the Mount of Olives, clopping up to Mount Zion,
charging the citadel on a donkey, a donkey,
cries of "King" ringing in his ears; crying, tears stinging his eyes.

11

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it,

gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying,

*Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

The journey of Jesus—a final meal before the final ascent,
a last supper, preparing to escape death, preparing for death,
bread as yet unrisen, nothing but his body, broken,
the cup, the covenant cup, the blood of the covenant, always blood.

12

*Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon.
So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself,
he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull. There they crucified him.
And he said, It is finished. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

The journey of Jesus—right on time even after all those centuries,
the Lamb was sacrificed at the very hour that the lamb was sacrificed.
At one Passover the journey was just beginning,
at the other the journey was finally finished, or was it?

13

*Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.
He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.
But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee;
there you will see him, just as he told you.*

The journey of Jesus went through a tomb,
through the deep darkness, through the valley of the shadow of death,
death of the firstborn, between the walls of a watery womb, out, up,
the exodus had ended, the journey had just begun.

LEE MAGNESS TEACHES NEW TESTAMENT AT MILLIGAN COLLEGE IN NORTHEASTERN TENNESSEE (JLMAGNESS@MILLIGAN.EDU).

