

# Saved from the River of Death

<sup>15</sup> Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiprah and the other Puah,

<sup>16</sup> "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live."

<sup>17</sup> But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

<sup>18</sup> So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?"

<sup>19</sup> The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."

<sup>20</sup> So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.

<sup>21</sup> And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.

<sup>22</sup> Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

**Exodus 2:1** Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman.

<sup>2</sup> The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.

<sup>3</sup> When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank.

<sup>4</sup> And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him.

<sup>5</sup> Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it.

<sup>6</sup> When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

<sup>7</sup> Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

<sup>8</sup> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

<sup>9</sup> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

<sup>10</sup> When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

### **Exodus 1:15-2:10**

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In every passage in the Bible, one must always keep in mind the narrow and the broad context. I like to think of the narrow context as that which the immediate passage is talking about. Today, it is the birth story of Moses. Moses was a real man born in Egypt during the days of Israel's slavery. But there is a broader context, which is the whole

of the Scripture. The Bible is one book, telling a grand story of redemption, of which any individual episode *must* be viewed as making up a single act in the whole story.

Today, I wish to show you how the **narrow context and the broad context are complementary to one another**, yet applicable in different ways from the birth of Moses. I want to begin with the narrow context and work my way outward. I hope to show you how **the narrow builds upon the broader**. Then, I hope to show you how the broader context needs to keep the narrow context in check, so that we do not make the Bible say things that it is not trying to say, even though we may see certain parallels in our contemporary situation that seem so similar we might be tempted to miss the forest for the trees, and thus do irreparable harm to the redemptive story that always lies in back of the the Exodus.

This is a difficult task before me today, because frankly, if the word got out, I would expect to see these things in the emails I get from right wing political organizations. While there are certainly timeless moral principles that apply as

much today as they did back then, there is a seduction in making some direct application between Israel and America in God's redemptive plans, when in fact no such relationship exists. Let me show you a rather obvious series of stages in the [decline of the State of ancient Egypt](#) and how this is directly related to God's plans for Israel.

The first thing one notices is how [a new king arises](#) “[who did now know Joseph](#)” (1:8). This phrase does not speak to motive. It could mean that he did not know who Joseph was because such a long time had passed. But more likely, because Joseph was such a prominent leader and the Jews were still living in Egypt, it means that this Pharaoh chose to act in ignorance of Joseph's wise counsel at the direction of God. I mean, imagine our country not knowing who Abraham Lincoln was. It is very difficult to think of how that could happen. The point is, the ruler (acting as, “the state”), [forgets God](#) and how he saved Egypt from such severe famine, and even made her wealthy in the midst of it.

In the next three verses the king (representing “the state”) engages in **secular pursuits**. Egypt becomes overwhelmed with having a **pure culture** (think about Egypt in contrast to the “**people of Israel**” [1:9] that have remained separate having not diffused themselves into the ancient Melting Pot), **maintaining peace** (the Pharaoh is concerned with his “**enemies**” [1:10] taking him over). He desires a strong, **vibrant economy** (he builds **Pithom and Raamses** [1:11], which are not called mausoleums or shrines, but “**store cities**.” I want you to think about this activity in light of Joseph who told the previous Pharaoh to store away food for the famine. Now this Pharaoh has forgotten Joseph, but is engaging in the *same activity*, this time apart from the God of Joseph).

Yet, things were not going well for this Pharaoh. His secular pursuits drove him to **worry and fear**, and like a good politician, he has to blame someone (but certainly not himself). Who better to **blame** than **those in the society that are different**, that want to remain distinct. Blame the Jews, the very people that saved Egypt all those years ago.

He calls out “the people of Israel” in vs. 9, because of his racism.

Now notice this: The seed of racism hatched in the need to *pass-the-blame* becomes state sanctioned racist policies under the guise of an economic stimulus package. “Let us deal shrewdly” (vs. 10) with Israel by forcing *them* to build the store cities for us. Let these people make us wealthier! But though the policies had their intended effect to make the lives of the Israelites more miserable, God kept blessing them! And in the process, the institutionalized racism drove the *people* to become increasingly fearful of those who were not like themselves. It says, “The Egyptians were in dread of Israel” (vs. 22). Why? What had they done to Egypt? Absolutely nothing! Their fear is irrational, just like us when we go down to five-points afraid of our lives because the people living there have different colored skin than we do.

To quell the fear, institutionalized racism becomes institutionalized slavery. In other words, the racism now takes a particular concrete form. Verse 13, “So they

ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves.”

Notice the downward spiral. 1) Forget God. 2) Become transfixed by secular pursuits which inevitably lead to moral decline. 3) Lose your sense of right and wrong. 4) Justify racism. 5) Justify Slavery. But the descent isn't finished.

Next comes *state sanctioned murder*. And even this is only the penultimate evil. Notice that the Pharaoh goes to “*Hebrew midwives*” and tries to coerce *them* with the fear of the state into murdering their own people. I call this *state sanctioned murder*, because the Egyptians are not yet engaging in the murder of innocents *themselves*. This has been the goal, I believe, since the Pharaoh singled out the Jews as the people to blame. But that goal is not achievable all at once. The feet must first slip before the body begins to fall. The frog must have the water turned up before it will let itself be boiled. The people must become inoculated to degrees of evil before the ultimate evil can be perpetrated without batting an eye. Yet, those degrees did not seem to take a long time to develop. It was in a

relatively fast period of time that the Egypt moved from distrust to infanticide.

We should linger here on the midwives for a moment. I love what Moses does. He names them by name. Shiphrah and Puah. What is so strange about this? Can you guess? I'll tell you. Everyone knows of Raamses or Amenhotep. They were the great Pharaohs. But we have no idea which Pharaoh is doing this. He is unnamed. The greatest leader on planet earth is unnamed. He's a nobody. But these two totally obscure Hebrew midwives are forever remembered, by name, for their deed. Don't you think that tells you a little about the Character of God? Stephen Curtis Chapman echoes the Psalmist when he asks, "Sometimes I look above me when stars are shining, and I feel so small; How could the God of heaven and all creation Know I'm here at all?" (In His Eyes). The answer is that the God created him in his image and sent his Son to die, just for him; just for you.

This God knows the names of those who fear him, but forgets the names of mighty kings that forget him. After

the Pharaoh tries to coerce the midwives into committing infanticide for him, doing his dirty work so that -- like Pilate -- he can keep his hands clean, we read “**But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live**” (1:17). And so God remembers them by name. Not only this, but it says that “**God dealt well with the midwives**” (vs. 20) and “**he gave them families**” of their own (21). For, God is the rewarder of those who do justly, but the punisher of those who act wickedly.

Yet, it is just here that **some people** try to impugn the midwives for committing sin. Why do I say that? **What did they do?** The problem comes in **verse 19** where Pharaoh summons them after finding out that the boys are living after childbirth. The two women (who are probably head nurses, since it is impossible to think that there were only two midwives in for a population of 2 million people!) **allegedly lie** to the Pharaoh.

**Augustine**, for instance, writes, “**God did good to the Hebrew midwives. . . not because they lied, but because they**

were merciful to God’s people. That. . . which was rewarded in them was, not *their deceit*, but their benevolence; kindness of mind, not *iniquity of lying*.” God “forgave” this “evil work” because of the previous “good works” of not murdering the infants.<sup>1</sup> Calvin is probably even harsher saying that not only did the midwives lie (which he calls “reprehensible” and “sin”), but they did not confess their piety towards God to the Pharaoh as the reason for their disobedience. So they are doubly guilty.

But the alternative to thinking that the midwives lied is not to say that their lies were “serviceable” lies as the Rabbis said (see Calvin), thereby making the difficult argument that some lies are not sinful. Philip Ryken has a better answer than this. He suggests that the Midwives were not engaged in lying at all, but in taunting. J. B. Lightfoot goes even farther saying this was “not a lie, but a glorious confession of their faith.”<sup>2</sup> I wonder, have you ever considered that this might be what is going on here?

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *On Lying*.

<sup>2</sup> John Lightfoot, “A Handful of Gleanings out of the Book of Exodus,” in *Works* (London, 1822), 2:357.

Think about what the midwives actually told the Pharaoh. It is too absurd to think it was actually a lie. “The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them” (19). Do you really think that Pharaoh would believe that? If so, I want to take you up to Brainard, MN to show you a real-life sized replica of the real Paul Bunyan. As Ryken says, “Their life—if it even be considered a lie—was such a whopper that they can hardly be accused of trying to deceive anyone. Think about it: If what Shiphrah and Puah said was literally true, then why would the Hebrews even need midwives? This is one of the places where understanding the Bible requires a sense of humor. Speaking tongue-in-cheek, the midwives were making sport of Pharaoh by suggesting that the Hebrews were hardier than the Egyptians. What they said was more a joke than a lie. Thus, Pharaoh was mocked.”<sup>3</sup>

Shiphrah means “beautiful one.” Puah means “splendid one.” What they did, *throughout the whole narrative* was

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<sup>3</sup> Ryken, *Exodus*, p. 42. Ryken adds, “...as well as deceived.” If this is not a lie, then I do not believe the Pharaoh was deceived about anything. Thus, his anger at the midwives is taken out directly on the males infants of Egypt in the next passage as we will see.

surely beautifully splendid in God's eyes, because they stood up to evil knowing that they might die. These women stood up for life, and refused to participate in the murder of infants. People today who are afraid to stand up for life should take notice, not only of the women's actions towards the infants, but in their actions towards the Pharaoh. God will not be mocked, **but those who try to usurp the inalienable right to life will be and should be.**

In the meantime, one can expect that if leader is mocked, **he will certainly seek revenge.** And revenge is exactly what the Pharaoh did seek. I believe the midwives did **not deceive** the king. **They infuriated** him with their declaration of faith in God, going before the king with such boldness and chutzpa though they knew they could be killed for it. **But upon what grounds would he kill them?** It appears that this was all done in secret in the first place. This is why he told the *midwives* to do it, because they would have, as those responsible for the boys immediately after birth, the best opportunity to kill the babies, and the mothers could just think that it died in the minutes after

birth. No one had to know. Let's keep this little political posturing hush-hush, just between us.

But now that his **craftiness** had turned into **rage**, the **cruel hate** of the antichrist is about to be unleashed. This scaly leviathan is about to make the deep boil like a pot. In his fury, he is going to make the water bubble and foam so that his wake looks like shining white hair (**Job 41:31-32**). The great sea monster is about to invade the Nile and stir up the mud (**Ezek 32:2**). Literally!

“Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live,” is the command given to “**all his people**” (**1:22**). No more *hoping* these Jews will just go away. No more *wishing* that they would die from forced labor. No more *secret attempts* to kill them. It's time for full-blooded, open-aired, publicly witnessed, **state enforced infanticide**. When you see a young Hebrew boy, murder him! Take his life. Throw him into the Nile. Drown them like their God drown the whole world in the flood. And now, **Egypt's journey to the Dark Side is complete**.

On this **narrow contextual level**, the level of these verses alone, there are some obvious points that are not easy to miss, especially when your own civilization that God had once blessed by revealing truth to it, has now forgotten Joseph, or maybe in our day it might be **Joseph Rogers** or **Joseph Mullins**, two of the original 102 that sailed aboard the Mayflower from England in hopes of finding religious liberty. There are moral similarities between those days and our own.

Of course, America has engaged in its fair share of Egyptian-like cruelty. This was never the utopia anyone had envisioned (because this side of heaven, there is no such thing). It was foolish to think it could be. From our very beginning, we engaged in the immoral **enslavement** of an entire race of people. We did it to stimulate the economy. We did it because we were afraid. A **civil war** began to change all that. A **civil rights war** ensued and now those who were once enslaved are represented in the highest office on the world's stage. And in my mind, *as far as pure race is concerned* (were we able to take it by itself), I believe

that this is one of the highlights in American history. Slavery as it was once known is officially dead. Egypt never ended slavery. The western world did. And even those who were once slaves in our country are able to achieve anything they want.

Yet, we have **traded slavery for our very souls**. Because even as we have opted not to see the color of a man's skin, we have taken this into realms that it should not be taken, cannot logically be argued, and cannot morally be justified, so that now we opt not to see the choices that people make that go against God and nature. Skin color is not a choice. Behavior is!

And in our own society, we now freely, openly, brazenly, defiantly murder children before they are fully out of a mother's womb. **46 million as of 2005**. We do it **in the name of politics**, so that we can get elected. We do it under **the ruse of utility**, legalizing embryonic stem cell research (which will only encourage abortion, because to have an embryonic stem cell, you need an embryo) to the laud and praise of the elite. We do it **in the name of**

economic stimulus as our Speaker of the House told George Stephanopoulos a month ago on “This Week,” “Family Planning services [i.e. Planned Parenthood and abortion clinics] reduce [state] costs” and help save the economy. We do it under the banner of “science,” claiming that because evolution is true, these “things” in the womb are only tissue samples of the mother. It’s not infanticide, because it’s not an infant. Evolution proves it. But evolution isn’t science. It is religion. And true science has unequivocally proven that this “thing” in the womb is a human being. Nobody wants to talk about that anymore, because it makes them feel guilty. It is a holocaust 8 times larger than the one Hitler engaged in during WWII against the Jews. And ours sees no end in sight.

And so, yes, we can draw out parallels between the early chapters of Exodus and the history (past and present) of the United States. And you can do it on both sides of the political aisle. We could do it with more than America: Slavery in England or the far-east, Hitler’s “final solution” or Communist China’s “one family, one child” policy. Obviously, it is inexcusable whenever these things occur.

They are an offense and sin against a Holy Omnipotent God. Nations will be judged for the crimes that they commit against humanity and the Living Lord of All.

There are **implications from this text that we can bring to bear upon our own culture today**. Watch the fall of one immoral empire and beware. We can look at the track of the Pharaoh and the track that our leaders are taking in both political parties and speak clearly, as the midwives did, with powerful arguments that do more than speak platitudes to a world that already has enough of them from the hundreds of sound bites they ingest daily from television. **Bumper stickers** about abortion aren't going to solve the problem. We need to develop **thinking Christians** that can tackle the intellectuals of our day and destroy their false arguments with truth. We need to **develop courage**, like these women had, to stand up though it may cost us our lives. We need to **speak publically**, even if they outlaw such speech in order to keep their consciences from being pricked. We need to **take vocation seriously** again, and become involved in the political arena as citizens, not as outsiders looking in. This

is what it means to be a faithful Christian in an evil world. We want to speak truth to a world that lies in error and shed light in these dark places.

But frankly, this is only [the narrowest of readings](#) from Exodus, and I'm not even sure that this is the meaning of the words that were written (though surely the application is justified from the timeless moral truth). I mean, Moses seems to be simply recounting a story, not preaching a sermon on killing babies. He is concerned with the outcome of those events and how they set up the rest of the book.

We can [view the downward spiral of Egypt from another perspective](#). The context of the whole Scripture, which is partially revealed even in the next few verses about the birth of Moses, is about God making [covenant promises](#) to chosen people and fulfilling those promises in miraculous ways. It is about God, taking sinners and promising to redeem them, in ways that are unimaginable and incredible. That is the golden thread of the Bible. Thus, I cannot stop the sermon today at the end of chapter 1. I

must press on so that you will not be left thinking that Moses wrote this to right the ship of America as so many Evangelicals today obviously this is the case.

Since our inception, Americans have viewed this country as a sort of new Israel. We like to think of ourselves as a new Israel. But it seems to me, if anything, we are like Egypt. Egypt knew about the true God through Joseph (Scripture tells us as much), even as America as a nation has known the truth about the God because Christians faithfully proclaimed it and were once actually involved as leaders of the country like Joseph. Egypt was kind towards God's people, graciously giving Jacob land to the east. America has always been kind towards God's people. But America is not the "chosen people." And even though the Colonies made compacts with the LORD (which has given us tremendous blessing and will ultimately bring about terrible curses), this was not the same thing as the LORD coming to our Pilgrim fathers, calling them out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to the land of milk and honey. But no one likes to think of America as paralleled with Egypt!

But here is my point. Moses isn't concerned with saving Egypt. [The book isn't about how to save Egypt from its forgetfulness of God.](#) In fact, it's just the opposite. Egypt, like all nations, is doomed to pass away. He is concerned with reminding the people of Israel how incredibly bad Egypt actually was and how it is *not* the land of the Promise. Later in the book they lament the fact that they no longer had the leeks and melons of Egypt, only that silly manna from heaven (as Paul might say, only Christ!). You can get the man out of Egypt, but you can't get Egypt out of the man. So he reminds them in this book that things were ghastly in Egypt, far worse than anything they ever had in the desert.

In the same way, the church must stop this love affair with what America once was and get on with the business of being the church. [America is not a city on a hill](#), though it has been a land of freedom and opportunity to immigrants. As much as I love the Pilgrims and a certain politician that once made that comparison, this is a title reserved for the Church of Jesus Christ. The light of America shines to

*inalienable* birthrights, not to spiritual birthrights in Jesus Christ. **You must stop confusing the kingdoms!**

The problem I, as a pastor, am concerned about, is the spiritual health of the Church. If I was in politics, I would rightly be concerned about government, and what I could do to correct its moral decay and rot. But I'm called to minister the gospel to the people of God. I am concerned with my flock that gets so flustered over George or Barrack that they have no little time for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John! **How much time did you spend this week looking at political websites and how much time did you spend in God's word?** I figure, both are things you do on your own freetime.

But think about the story of the birth of Moses, because it comes on the heels of such terrible suffering and evil. Even as baby boys are being hurled into the river, **a deliverer is born**. God saves him from the river of death. Again, Moses does that "name" thing. **"A man from the house of Levi took a Levite woman who conceived and bore a son."** **Why not give us their names?** Probably because Moses did

not want them venerated as saints before an idol worshipping group of slaves born into Egyptian polytheism. Their names are not important. Even his name is not important, but is mentioned because of its relation to the story.

This unnamed woman<sup>4</sup> is a **Levite** and so is her father. The lineage is not important *yet*, but it soon will be, for as we know the Levites are the priestly lineage, and there was a covenant that was given to them somewhere along the line.

She bears a “**fine child**” (2:2) and so she hides him three months from the storm troopers of Nazi Egypt. The phrase here is “*ki tov*” (lit: **because he was good**). No one knows with certainty why Moses chose to put this strange little fact into the story. But nothing is accidental in God’s word. It is quite possible that this harkens back to Genesis 1 when God pronounces at the moment of a created this “*ki tov*” (and “**it was good.**” **Is this a new creation theme that is developing here at the birth of Moses? Is this the**

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<sup>4</sup> The fact that Moses names them both (Amram and Jochebed; 6:20) later on demonstrates that he is concerned with minimizing their role in this story. This is a story of God’s deliverance, not their illumination and ingenuity.

pronouncement of goodness by one hovering above the waters?

She makes a basket for him, made of bulrushes and daubed with bitumen and pitch. She puts him in it and places it among the reeds by the river bank. The baby is saved from drowning by a little boat. Does that sound familiar? I told you last week that Moses wrote Exodus as a continuing saga from Genesis. Earlier today I said that sometimes words are important. This is one of those times.

The word translated “basket” (*tibah*) by the ESV is translated as “ark” in Genesis 6. But it’s the same Hebrew word. In fact, there are the only two stories where the word is used in the entire Bible! Genesis 6:14 says, “Make yourself and ark. . . and cover it inside and out with pitch.” Of course, the parallels between the two stories are self-evident. Besides the ark, a man is placed inside of it and is saved through the very water that is destroying others. Out of the ark will come one through whom God will create a new people. Moses is a new Noah, and the world that Noah entered was a new creation, presided over by a

hovering bird over the water, having the ark come to rest on the seventh day. And Noah was a new Adam, friend to the animals, but image-bearer of God commanded to be fruitful and multiply. This is why Moses intentionally draws us back to the early chapters of Genesis with the language of his birth.

I wish to say one more thing about what happens next. Moses' older sister (again unnamed, but probably Miriam), watches to see what will happen to the boy. As she hovers around, behold! The **daughter of Pharaoh is taking a bath in the river**. In my studies on baptism, I have happened upon an interpretation of this by the Jews. The **Mishna** says that she went down to the river “**to wash off the defilement of her heathen descent.**” In other words, the Rabbis believed that this was no ordinary bath. It was a ritualistic bath. What they would call a *mikveh*. What we might call a baptism, if she were converting to Christianity. This makes sense, given that she is in the sacred Nile rather than simply taking a bath in a bath tub inside the palace. The Nile was the sacred river to the Egyptians.

What is curious is that in this ritualistic fashion, she draws Moses out of the water. Moses even calls our attention to this by showing that this is what his name means “I drew him out of the water.” Again, the idea is similar to that of the flood, which the NT refers to as a baptism. Peter says, “In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared... eight persons were brought safely through the water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you” (1 Pet 3:20-21). Noah came out of the ark after the water had receded.

I have many quotes from the church fathers, men like Tertullian, Cyprian, Basil, and Ambrose about their understanding of the flood in this way. For instance, Tertullian says, “After the waters of the deluge, by which the old iniquity was purged – after the baptism, so to say, of the world – a dove was the herald which announced to the earth the assuagement of celestial wrath.”<sup>5</sup> After the baptism, for those that make it through alive, God’s wrath is appeased. Moses, the one who survives the harsh waters

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<sup>5</sup> Tertullian, “On Baptism,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3*, ed. Alexander Roberts, D.D. and James Donaldson, LL.D. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), p. 673.

of the Nile, when others are being drown, is going to become the deliverer for the people.

**So what is the bigger picture here?** Even at the early stage that something similar to two events in Genesis is taking shape. God is drawing our minds back to the flood and to creation (both of which are written to parallel one another as well). God is showing us that a new creation is about to be birthed. How does this fit in with the previous section? Just like the flood. Out of death and destruction comes new life and salvation!

God has orchestrated all of these events in the suffering of Israel to bring about a single birth, the man Moses, who will deliver the people out of slavery to Egypt. It isn't about saving Egypt or bringing her back to her Christian roots. It is about saving the chosen people out of Egypt, the very place that is treating him so poorly.

In light of the NT, we can say something even more important to us today. **Our LORD Jesus**, as Hebrews rightly explains, is **greater than Moses**. He is greater than

Moses, because he endured what Moses endured. **At his birth**, a new kind of Pharaoh, Herod the Great, tried to kill him along with all the other male infants in Bethlehem (**Mt 2:13-15**). Later, as he grew up, he went down into the water, and was pulled up again by John the Baptist, wherein he symbolized the new creation that he, the second Adam, was about to initiate, even as the Spirit-bird hovered over his head and the Father pronounced upon him a great blessing.

When you are addicted to the things of Egypt, then you will not care a wit about a new creation. And nothing I say here will be meaningful to you. But when you learn that Egypt is fading away, the things of earth grow strangely dim. The stories of the Scripture will take on new significance and will become full of wonder when you learn to read the narrow in light of the broad. For now you can see that in the birth of the greatest OT saint is foreshadowed the life of the coming Messiah, who was himself plunged headfirst into the waters so that he might take the suffering that you deserve upon himself. As the Psalmist says,

“Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me... rescue me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Do not let the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the Pit close its mouth over me” (Ps 69:1-2, 14-15; cf. Gen 1:2 with Gen 8:2; Ex 15:5; Ezek 31:15; Jonah 2:3, 5; Hab 3:10; Rom 10:17).

But Jesus Christ, though dead three days and nights in the earth, has come out of the waters alive singing, “You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?' The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O LORD my God” (Jonah 2:3-6). And because he has life,

you have life. Trust in this Deliverer and your life will be saved from the coming wrath.