



*United Presbyterian Church*

*Harrodsburg, Kentucky*

Sermon: Name the Star

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The first animated feature film produced by Dreamworks SKG was the *Prince of Egypt*. It's the story of Moses, told for a 21st-century audience. Two hundred people worked on this film for four years, and about one million individual drawings make up this 88-minute animated special.

Dreamworks SKG is the first animation studio to open in Hollywood in 50 years, and it is led by three of the world's best storytellers—Steven Spielberg in film, Jeffrey Katzenberg, in animation and David Geffen in music. It was, in part, the desire of these three artists to tell the story of Moses that led to the creation of Dreamworks SKG.

The overall visual style of the movie is inspired by the epic films of director David Lean, the ethereal biblical illustrations of 19th-century French artist Gustave Dore, and the paintings of impressionist Claude Monet which use contrasting strokes of color to create a sense of light and space. “We want the audience to respond to our film the way we respond to fine art, not to comic books,” said art director, Kathy Altieri.

Taking great care to hold true to the biblical account, Jeffrey Katzenberg brought in over 500 religious leaders to see parts of the film and make suggestions. On more than one occasion, the film's producers say, such input was implemented into the movie.

Still, there are some diversions from the biblical text. For example: In the movie, Moses and Ramses have a prior relationship. They are portrayed as having been raised together as brothers.

It's the queen who takes Moses from the water, not Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses' wife is brought into the story much earlier than in the biblical account—but she's Michelle Pfeiffer, so why not?

Moses is a more active participant who speaks for himself. He doesn't need Aaron as much.

Moses was indeed a prince of Egypt, but there was another prince of Egypt that we might consider a greater star. His name in Hebrew is Joshua, in Greek and English it is Jesus. He was born in a cattle stall in Bethlehem. Who is the real prince of Egypt? Who is the real star at Christmas? I vote for Jesus Christ.

### **1. There are many similarities between Moses and Jesus.**

Male Jewish babies were ordered killed by the monarch. The Pharaoh had commanded his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live”. (Exodus 2:2, 1:22) Herod, in an attempt to kill the Jewish messiah, ordered all male Jewish babies killed. Because of this threat, Jesus and his parents fled to Egypt. An angel appeared to Joseph and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt ... for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him” (Matthew 1:18, 24, 2:13).

Moses was raised by the Egyptian princess to be royalty. It was foretold that Jesus would be royalty. “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, ‘God is with us’ ” (Matthew 1:21-23).

When both Jesus and Moses were young, God set them apart to be the savior of their people. Moses was commissioned at the burning bush. Jesus was commissioned by God, while John baptized him in the Jordan.

God commanded Moses to say to the Israelites, “I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment” (Exodus 6:6). At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:18,19).

The Passover meal was instituted under Moses before God led them from Egypt. Jesus observed the Passover with his disciples before he gave his broken body and shed blood to save all people from their sins.

The Israelites went into the Red Sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians” (Exodus 14:22, 26).

There is a similar baptism with Jesus. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54,55).

Wandering in the wilderness, Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it on a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live (Num. 21:9). The gospel story tells us, “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (Jn 3:14-16)

Moses offered mighty deeds and the terrifying displays of power in the sight of all Israel and the Pharaoh to save his people. (Deuteronomy 34:11,12) Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead and astounded the multitudes with his miracles. Why? According to the record it was “seek out and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

## **2. Who is the star at Christmas?**

While Moses might be a candidate, my vote still goes to Jesus. Could the star at Christmas have been the star the wise men saw? For these men traveling to Bethlehem this guiding light was not simply a star, but this star was *the star*. These wise men, as students of stars, may have known, that there are 200 billion stars in the known universe, but as they looked up they noticed that this star was a different star.

Some might have supposed that this was the star, Sirius, the brightest star in the universe and sometimes known as the wishing star. As the sun sets in the evening many people find the bright star and say “star light, star bright, won't you grant my wish tonight.” Sirius was a bright star, but it is not the Christmas star.

Some might suppose that this star was Alpha Centuria, the closest star to the planet earth, only 4.3 light years away. Some say that since it's so close this must have been the star that the wise men saw.

How close is close? Look at these facts, a light year is 5.8 trillion miles from earth and at best Alpha Centuria must have been over 23 trillion miles away. But the God we serve is not that far removed, for I hear the song writer declaring "He's only a whisper away." This star was a different star:

*It came prepared by the mighty hand of God.*

*It came bathed in the bright and shiny waters of joy.*

*It came propelled by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*It came flung from the battlements of heaven.*

**FROM THE THRONE OF GOD IT CAME:**

*Tiptoeing through the galaxies and slipping past the milky way.*

*It came charging past the angry redness of Mars and the coldness of Jupiter.*

*It came dodging the beautiful rings of Saturn and the surface of Venus.*

*It came beyond the radiating heat of the Sun  
and the cool midnight stare of a silent full Moon."*

### **3. Who is the Christmas star?**

Jesus is the star. Not Moses; not Mary; not Joseph; not even the shepherds, angels or wise men. Focus on the Babe lying there in a crib surrounded by straw. He is your star.

*Santa may visit with riches at night,*

*Your table be covered with tastes to delight,*

*Your house filled with dazzle and lights,*

*Your family with mirth tied tight.*

*Without Jesus to save, the Christ to rule,*

*You'll miss the real yule,*

*you'll fall short of the joy.*

*Jesus is king and head of the church.*

*Jesus is God and shepherd of your stable.*

*Jesus is the sovereign of all;  
a star burning bright;  
a star burning true.*

Presbyterians have chosen up sides, for years, and fought over many issues. The far left and the far right leave little room for compromise, yet there is hope. The truth is not found somewhere in the middle between right and left. That is not the center of the church. Jesus is. He is the truth and the life. Jesus is your star; he is the light of the world. Jesus spoke to us, saying, *'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'* (Jn. 8:12)

*Almighty God, you have filled us with the light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of faith shine in all that we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*