



## ON THE BANKS OF THE DEEP RED SEA

Exodus 13–15

God's final plague on Egypt humiliated Pharaoh and the false gods of Egypt, delivered His chosen people from oppression, and vindicated Himself as the true and only God. The death of the firstborn still stands as a powerful statement of God's power, sovereignty, and glory.

Have you ever found yourself in a tight spot—boxed in, without any way out? Well, today, we're going to learn how to respond in such situations as we watch the Israelites pinned down at the banks of the deep Red Sea.

As Exodus chapter 13 opens, Israel has just left Egypt. The first thing Moses is told to do here in verse 2 is to consecrate, or set apart, to the Lord the firstborn "both of man and of beast." God is saying, "They belong to Me." Now this is going to be a timeless reminder of the cost of their freedom, for remember an innocent lamb died so that the firstborn of each Israelite family could live.

In verse 3, the Lord institutes the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This will remind them of how quickly they left Egypt—they didn't even have time to bake bread as they packed up to leave Egypt.

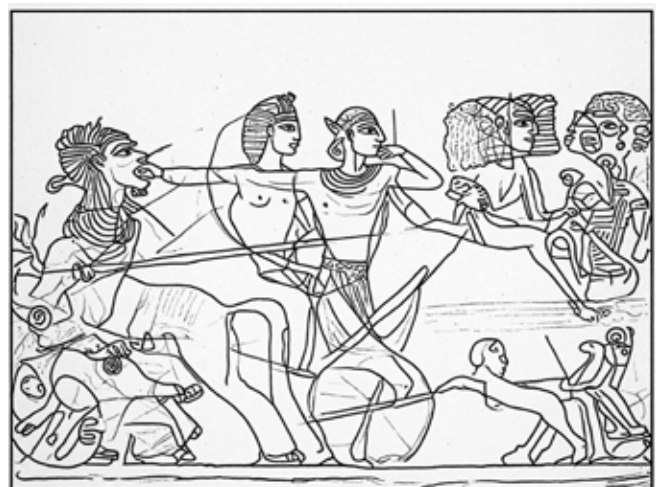
Now, in verse 17 we learn that the Lord doesn't lead the people on the normal route that would have taken them to the promised land in a matter of two weeks. God wants them to avoid the Egyptian forts we know from history had been built along that route and would have discouraged them along the way. So, God is taking them another way, which leads toward the Red Sea.

Verse 19 tells us Moses "took the bones of Joseph

with him." You remember from Genesis 50:25 that Joseph made his brothers swear to take his bones to the promised land because he knew by faith the Lord was going to keep His covenant promise.

Here in Exodus 14, the Israelites arrive at the Red Sea. Critics will argue that the Red Sea here is not really a sea at all but a shallow marsh, and no miracle is needed to wade across ankle-deep water. But if that's true, how is Pharaoh's army going to drown in ankle-deep water?

In fact, Pharaoh knows that the Israelites are trapped with no way to cross this sea, and here he comes after them.



Man bringing lamb for sacrifice



The Israelites start blaming Moses for leading them into this fix. They are naturally terrified, and they cry out, “It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness” (verse 12).

But wait a second. They’re really blaming God, for *God* is the one who has led them here. Beloved, whenever you start blaming God for the tight spot you’re in, you are only going to go deeper into despair.

So, Moses preaches a sermon to them here, and what a sermon it is. Maybe it’s the sermon you need to hear today.

*“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”*

(verses 13-14)

God tells Moses in verse 16:

*“Lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.”*

Continuing now in verses 17-18, the Lord says:

*“I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.”*

And with that, God moves that pillar of cloud and fire between them and the army of Egypt so they can’t see the Israelites crossing over.

Now keep in mind that this Red Sea has to part a good mile or two wide in order for two million people to walk through. This isn’t a little path through the sea.

Once Israel has crossed over, that pillar of cloud is removed, and the Egyptians see what’s happening and make a run through the dry seabed after them. We read in verses 24-25:

*The LORD... threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them.”*

But it’s too late to flee. The waters return, completely destroying the Egyptian army. My friend, this is a terrifying picture of the coming judgment of God against all who reject Him and one day stand before Him.

*“It’s because God doesn’t just want to deliver us; He wants to develop us. We want to be happy; God wants us to be holy.”*

Now let me point out some practical truths for us today in this Wisdom Journey.

First, difficulties are designed by God to develop trust. Verse 31 says:

*“Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared*



*the LORD, and they believed in the LORD.”*

So often today we hear, “Hey, if you’re following God, you’re going to be happy, wealthy, healthy; everything is going to work out and smooth out.” Isn’t it interesting that here God leads the Israelites out of Egypt and into difficulty? He walks the Israelites right into a dead end. Why? As one of my seminary professors used to say, “It’s because God doesn’t just want to deliver us; He wants to develop us. We want to be happy; God wants us to be holy.”

Oh, there’s happiness in Jesus Christ—don’t misunderstand me. But He has designed some predicaments along the way to deepen your faith in His power; and sometimes it takes a Red Sea to do that.

Second, those who are willing to trust God have a greater appreciation for His deliverance. The problem is we rarely give God the chance. We have plan A, plan B, and plan C, and maybe, when those fail, we say, “Okay, Lord, what’s *Your* plan?” Sometimes God wants us to run out of options, until He becomes our only option and we simply wait and trust in Him.

Third, when God’s power is revealed, our response ought to be praise. The Israelites are on the other side of the Red Sea and ready to sing! Note these first two verses in chapter 15:

*“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.”*

When you’re boxed in and there seems to be no way out, what are you thinking? “Is God here? Is God aware? Is God powerful enough?” Oh, but when He

pulls you through and you’re on the other side, it’s time to sing, “This is my God, and I will praise Him.”

Here’s another stanza:

*“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed.”* (verses 11-13)

When we see God move—when we allow Him the opportunity to work, and He does—our response should be praise to Him.

Maybe today you’re facing some great challenge, some difficult decision or painful experience; I want you to remember that this God of Israel is your God too. If you belong to Him, if you know His Son as your Savior, you can wait and watch and pray for His answer, His deliverance, His development of you, and His plan for you in the days ahead!

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What was the Lord communicating to Egypt through the final plague? What was He teaching Israel? How do these truths apply to your life?

Why was it important for the work of Christ to be pictured in the Old Testament era even though the people probably did not fully understand the portrait? Why are these pictures important for you today?

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