

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

EX. 14:10 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

11 And they said unto Moses, *Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?*

12 *Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

13 And Moses said unto the people, **Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.**

14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 And the LORD said unto Moses, **Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:**

16 But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea.

17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

18 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

20 and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground*: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

NOTES

Parting the Red Sea

Lesson Text: Exodus 14:10-22

Related Scriptures: Exodus 5:15—6:1; 15:1-21;
Joshua 2:8-11; Psalm 106:1-12; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6

TIME: 1446 B.C.

PLACE: Egypt

GOLDEN TEXT—"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14).

Lesson Exposition

BATTLE MOVEMENTS— EX. 14:10-19

Egypt sets out toward the Israelites (Ex. 14:10-14). Verse 4 says Egypt changed their mind about letting Israel go because the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh was complicit in this heart-hardening (cf. 8:15); God did not coerce him to sin. Nevertheless, God guided the king's heart (cf. Prov. 21:1) in order to gain glory over Pharaoh and the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:4).

When Israel saw Pharaoh's army, they too had a sudden change of heart. At first, they cried out to the Lord. Quickly, however, their cries turned into a panicked desire to surrender and return to serve Egypt.

That statement had serious implications. God was delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt precisely so that they could serve Him rather than Egypt (8:1; 9:1, 13). The first time Israel encountered adversity, they wanted to run back to their old way of life.

Moses responded with words of assurance, giving the people three commands. First, Moses instructed them not to be afraid. Second, he told them to stand firm. They were not to go through with their plan to surrender and return to Egypt but instead were

to hold their ground. Third, Moses told them simply to watch, because they would see God deliver them from the pursuing army.

Israel commanded to set out toward the sea (Ex. 14:15-18). Although Israel would not need to engage the Egyptians in battle (vs. 14), they were not to sit idly by. They were to "go forward" toward the sea (vs. 15).

God then instructed Moses to stretch out his staff over the sea. God would divide the sea, enabling the Israelites to walk through it on "dry ground" (vs. 16). The Egyptians would follow, and that was part of God's plan! By following Israel into the sea, Pharaoh and his army would become instruments for God's "honour."

The Angel of God sets out (Ex. 14:19). With the Egyptians bearing down on Israel, it was now the Angel of God's turn to set out, or "remove," from His place in front of the Israelites and move behind them. At the same time, the pillar of cloud, which represented God's presence (13:21), also moved behind the Israelites.

Biblical scholars debate whether the terms "angel of God" and "angel of the Lord" in Scripture refer simply to an angel or to the presence of God Himself.

In certain passages, the identification is clear. In Genesis 31:11-13, for example, the “angel of God” calls Himself the “God of Bethel.” In other passages, there is a close connection but not an explicit identification. For example, when Moses encountered the burning bush in Exodus 3, the text seems to use the terms “angel of the Lord,” “God,” and “Lord” interchangeably. In other passages, there is no indication at all of who the “angel of the Lord” is.

Because a language can use the same term in different ways, we need to be careful not to assume immediately that the “angel of the Lord” is always identical with God Himself. We also need to realize that even in the passages that identify the angel of the Lord as divine, there is a reason the author chooses to call Him an angel rather than simply God. Perhaps God’s “angel” acted as His *visible* manifestation, since He is invisible.

Here, the angel’s close connection to the pillar of cloud (cf. 13:21) means this was likely a manifestation of God’s presence. Just as Moses had promised the Israelites in 14:14, the Lord was moving into battle position on their behalf.

DELIVERANCE THROUGH DIVISIONS—Ex. 14:20-22

The Angel of God divides the two camps (Ex. 14:20). While the cloud cast darkness on the Egyptian camp, it “gave light by night” to the Israelites (vs. 20). Just as in the plague of darkness, God made a distinction between Egypt and Israel; only Egypt was covered in darkness, and the Egyptians could not come near Israel all night as a result (cf. 10:23).

This scene also echoed God’s first act of Creation. God spoke into the darkness, and there was light. Then He divided the darkness from the light and called them “Night” and “Day” (Gen. 1:2-5). Similarly, God brought light into

the darkness at the Red Sea and separated the two so that the light lit the night in Israel’s camp. God was marking Israel’s exodus as the beginning of His plan for a restored creation.

The Lord divides the sea (Ex. 14:21-22). God continued to imitate His original acts of Creation by dividing the sea to reveal dry land beneath (cf. Gen. 1:9), and Israel walked through.

God threw the pursuing Egyptians into chaos, and they recognized that Yahweh fought for Israel (Ex. 14:25). Then, after God plunged the sea back on top of the Egyptians, Israel praised the Lord and believed in Him (vs. 31).

—Matthew Robinson

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Egyptians change their minds about letting Israel go?
2. How did the Israelites respond when they saw the Egyptians pursuing them?
3. How did Moses respond to the Israelites’ fear?
4. What was the Israelites’ role in their deliverance?
5. Why did God plan to let the Egyptians follow the Israelites into the divided sea?
6. Who was the “angel of God” in Exodus 14:19?
7. How did the Lord’s division of the two camps help Israel?
8. What two previous acts of God were echoed in the parting of the Red Sea?
9. How was the parting of the sea a callback to Creation?
10. How did God fulfill His purpose of getting honor for His name through the Red Sea crossing?

—Matthew Robinson

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Difficult trials can affect our reasoning (Ex. 14:10-12).
2. We will see God's power at work in our lives if we are willing to patiently surrender our circumstances to Him (vss. 13-14).
3. As God provided a way of escape from slavery to Egypt, so He provides a way of escape from slavery to sin (Ex. 14:15-16; cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).
4. One reason God may allow trials in our lives is because they will bring Him glory (Ex. 14:17-18).
5. The Lord is like a wall of defense between us and His enemies (vss. 19-20).
6. The power God used to create the universe is the same power He uses to redeem His people (vss. 21-22).

—Matthew Robinson

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What can fear do to our walk with God (Ex. 14:10-12)?
2. Why was it so important for God to gain honor over Pharaoh and the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:17-18)?
3. Why don't we see God's power displayed today in the same ways it was displayed at the Red Sea? What other ways do we see His power displayed?
4. What kinds of trials make it difficult to keep following God today? Why is that? How can we prepare for those trials?
5. Why do you think God used natural means (a strong east wind) to part the sea rather than making it happen in an instant (vs. 21)?

—Matthew Robinson

Golden Text Illuminated

"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14).

God loves to paint Himself into corners. He ordains events that are seemingly impossible so that He alone can get the glory when they are resolved.

That is precisely the scenario that unfolded in the exodus from Egypt. After fleeing the land of Egypt, the scrambling Israelites found themselves cornered at the Red Sea with the armies of Pharaoh closing in. At that moment, the Lord looked weak, shortsighted, or even cruel to put His people in such a situation. But Moses declared that the Lord would fight for Israel. The scene ended with a crushing defeat of Pharaoh's armies.

God's mysterious ways in history and in the deliverance of His people offer us practical help that produces fearless faith in the midst of our trials.

First, we must remember that apparent setbacks are God's design. How freeing it is that the situations that seem to have no apparent resolution have God's fingerprints all over them!

Second, we must remember that God uses trials to increase our dependence on Him. Despite claims to the contrary, God does give us more than we can handle in this life, that we may recognize our weakness and cast ourselves upon His power alone (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-9).

Third, trials are designed to increase our joy in the glory of God. As we wait on God to do the impossible, we position ourselves to better see His glory. One of the highest joys of the believer is to see God displayed for the treasure that He is when He intervenes in trials.

—Jerod A. Gilcher