

Monday Week 14 **The Red Sea Crossing**

Q 53 What did Pharaoh tell Moses after the plague of the firstborn?

A Pharaoh told Moses to take the people away from Egypt and serve the Lord.
(Exodus 12:29-33)

Dan and Dave were wrestling on the living room floor. Dan was older and quite a bit bigger than Dave. He didn't have trouble pinning Dave after they wrestled for a while. What he did have trouble doing was to get Dave to give. He had him down, and asked, "Do you give?"

"No," answered Dave in a strained voice.

Dan just clamped down harder. Finally, Dave couldn't move, and he could hardly get his breath.

"Do you give now?"

Dave felt like he had claustrophobia. He started feeling panicked. He had to get out. But he couldn't move. "I give!" he panted. That's when Dan let him up.

That's just a little idea of how Pharaoh must have felt. He had lasted through nine plagues, and still wouldn't listen to God. But after the tenth plague, he had enough. He let God's people go. Pharaoh would have been much wiser to obey God before God ever sent the plagues. It never pays to disobey God.

Thinking Deeper

God will do great things for His people. He allowed the Israelite women to spoil the Egyptians by borrowing their precious jewels and clothing the night of the Passover. When they left Egypt, they had vast wealth. God did great things against Egypt on behalf of the Children of Israel. He sent the plagues and put a difference between the Egyptian homes and the Israelite homes. On the night of the Passover, God provided a way for the Israelite fathers to protect their homes from death. The father would take the blood of the lamb and put it on his doorposts and lintel. That was the sign God was looking for. He would pass over that house and not bring death.

The great things God does for us also must be under the covering He gives us. We must be under the blood of Christ. It is the blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin. It is the blood of Christ that speaks to God on our behalf. It is the blood of Christ that protects us from Satan's attacks. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11). God will do great things for us as we are under the blood of Christ.

Tuesday Week 14 **The Red Sea Crossing**

Q. 54 How did God lead the Children of Israel after they left Egypt?

A. He led them with a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. (Ex. 13:17-22)

A man was in a great woods one day, trying to go to a certain place by a lake. However, he had no compass, and the day being cloudy, he couldn't see the sun to get directions. He wandered here and there and soon got the impression that he was going around in circles. Eventually he came across an Indian who offered to help him find his way. The Indian looked around for a while, and then headed off. Every so often he would look up into the clouds. After they had gone for a time, they came to the lake at exactly the place the man wanted to go.

"How did you find this place so surely?" asked the traveler. The Indian pointed to the sky.

"Take notice of the clouds above the lake," explained the Indian. They are a different color than the clouds above the land," "I could see the map of the lake in the clouds."

God had a special way to lead the Children of Israel. He had a cloud that went before them in the day and a column of fire at night. They could clearly see the way God was leading.

Thinking Deeper

In 2002 a major fire broke out in the barns at Woodbine Racetrack in Ontario, Canada. Workers went into the barns and led the horses out. Thirty four horses died in the fire. What was strange was that most of those horses had been led out of their barns. When they were left to themselves, they ran back into the fire, where they perished. Why? Speculation is that under duress they fled to what had been up to then a safe place. They went to what was familiar. But it turned out to be destructive.

God led the Israelites out of Egypt. However, He didn't lead them on the shortest route to the Promised Land. "God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt" (Ex. 13:17). Think about it. The plagues were in Egypt. Death was in Egypt. Paganism was in Egypt. But God knew that as soon as the way would get rough, the Israelites would want what had been familiar. They would remember the place where they had been dependent. Like a horse running back into a burning building, they would likely run back to Egypt.

When we encounter times of stress, it is no time to run back to the fire. It is no time to give up on God and go back to the devil. Even though we face upheaval, committing ourselves to God's protection is the safe place. "The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Pr. 18:10).

Wednesday Week 14 **The Red Sea Crossing**

Q 55 Where did Pharaoh's army catch up to the Israelites?

A The army came upon Israel at the Red Sea. (Ex.14:5-9)

The preacher drove up to a house in the country to make a visit. He left his car and walked to the porch. He knocked on the door. No one answered so he turned around and walked back toward his car. Suddenly, a big dog with a bad bite came around the corner and ran straight toward the preacher. With the dog after him, the preacher raced to his car, opened the door and jumped in, just before the dog caught him. The preacher breathed a sigh of relief, thankful to God he hadn't been bitten by the dog.

It wasn't long after the Children of Israel left Egypt that the Egyptian army began chasing them. Pharaoh had changed his mind about letting them go. He wanted them as slaves again. The Israelites fled to the Red Sea. That's where the Egyptian army caught up to them. Israel needed God's help to save them from the Egyptian army. Where can we go when we are chased by our enemy? We can go to God for help. "God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1).

Thinking Deeper

Dirk Willems is one of the best known martyrs of the Anabaptist tradition. He had been baptized as a child, but when he was an adult he had come to personal faith in Christ and felt the need to be baptized as a believer. His re-baptism was viewed as an affront to the church, so he was arrested and put unto prison. He languished in the jail for some time and lost quite a bit of weight due to the austere conditions. One day he tied some rags together and made a rope long enough so that he could escape. His route to freedom was across a pond that was frozen over. As he was crossing, he was spotted by a guard, who followed him across the pond. Because he was so light, Willems made it to land. The guard, however, broke through the ice. Hearing his cries, Willems stopped and looked back. His Christian heart of compassion was stirred by the sight of the guard struggling in the icy water. Willems went back and rescued him. The guard, now out of personal danger, captured Willems and returned him to prison. Later, Dirk Willems was burned at the stake. His compassion for his enemy has been a great challenge to Christians through the centuries.

The other part of the story, that the guard would turn on his rescuer, is a reminder of the mind set of people like Egypt's Pharaoh. They "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for [they] neither go in [them]selves, neither suffer...them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13). In all these things, God writes the last chapter. Dirk Willems was awarded the martyr's crown. Israel was saved by the parting of the Red Sea.

Thursday Week 14 **The Red Sea Crossing**

Q 56 How did God save Israel from Pharaoh's army?

A He made a way through the Red Sea for Israel, and then drowned the Egyptian army.
(Exodus 14:23-31)

The spider spun its web carefully. Some of the threads it spun were sticky. Others were not. So that the spider would not get caught in its own web, it knew which threads were not sticky, and only walked on them. When the web was ready, the spider went to a special place to hide and watch. After a time, an insect flew into the web and got stuck. The spider ran to the insect, carefully avoiding the sticky threads of the web. It spun threads around the insect. Then the spider waited. It could have a fresh meal anytime it wanted. The spider's web was a place it could be safe, but where other insects would be captured.

The Red Sea was a safe escape for Israel, but a place of destruction for the Egyptians. When the Egyptians had the Israelites trapped beside the Sea, God opened a way for Israel to escape by sending a strong wind through the night and opening a path through the sea. They were able to walk on dry land with the walls of the sea on either side of them. When the Egyptians saw the path through the sea, they followed. But after Israel made it to the other side, God caused the walls of water to come together. All the Egyptians in the sea were drowned. The same sea that was used to save God's people was used to destroy their enemies.

Thinking Deeper

"Let's go to Siberia. Perhaps things will be better there," suggested the Russian husband. He was offering his wife a possible alternative to having their children continue in the public school where their faith was openly attacked. Stalin had launched a five year plan to eliminate the name of God from the Soviet Union.

"No matter where we go inside of Russia, it won't be safe," she replied.

They decided to go to the capitol and ask permission to leave Russia. The officials looked at their file-- a large family with two students almost ready to become teachers, the father a small business man—and decided that there was no possibility that this fine Soviet family could leave Russia.

Disappointed, the family turned to prayer. Could God intervene on their behalf and free them from oppression? Of course He could.

God used the government to answer their prayers. Government quotas, taxes and fines ruined the businessman, and he was soon disenfranchised (lost his vote). His children were all thrown out of school, and many of their belongings were confiscated. They decided to go again and ask if they could leave Russia. Now the officials saw a family that was a drain on the Soviet system, and issued their passports. The family lost no time leaving Russia. And it's a good thing, because four months later the Red Army troops came into the village, dragged off almost all of the men, and they were never seen again.

But this Christian family was safe in America, a testimony to the fact that God can "part the Red Sea" for anyone who trusts in Him.

Friday Week 14 **The Red Sea Crossing**

Review the Week's Questions

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What happened when the Children of Israel went through the Red Sea was a miracle. How could walls of water stand up? How could they stay standing until over a million people passed by? It was a miracle. A miracle is something that doesn't naturally happen. It is something that God does. God is so great that He can do miracles. And He does them.

A man had a wicked heart. He was mean to his family. His children were afraid of him. Then he heard about Jesus. He was sorry for his sins and asked Jesus to forgive him and come into his heart. His heart was changed. He became kind and gentle. His family was no longer afraid of him. This mean man had a miracle happen to him. God did something in his heart.

God can work in your heart, too. "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Cor. 5:17).

Thinking Deeper

"How did Moses cross the Red Sea?" is a children's song that asks a very important question. Biblical archaeologists argue about the place of the crossing and the accurate date. Some look for naturalistic ways to explain the ten plagues that precipitated the Exodus. Some of these archaeologists are not Christians but deal with Biblical issues because archaeology veers into the Biblical story. The problems archaeologists encounter are numerous. It has been thousands of years since the Exodus. There are bits of historical records from the time, but they can be explained from various perspectives. The exact location of crossing the Red Sea has been rigorously debated. Out of all this come various conclusions: the plagues and the Red Sea crossing can be explained as the amazing congruence of rare but natural phenomena; the whole idea is mythical and there is no reason to try to establish it with archaeological findings; part of the Biblical record is valid, while much of it is not. Standing amidst these possibilities is also the position that the Bible is true, and as the inspired, inerrant word of God has left us with an accurate record of the happenings.

Archaeology is a bit like other scientific efforts that deal with history. Conclusions about the observations are constantly being adjusted and re-evaluated due to new findings. All of which means that these conclusions should always be viewed with some skepticism, especially when they contradict the Biblical record. As has been said, the Bible is "an anvil that's worn out many a hammer." There is a reason for that. "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).