

THE RED SEA

(Exodus 4:29 – 8:32; 13:17 – 15:1)

Purpose: To teach the power of God, and His ability to free from the slavery of sin.

Years ago in the land of Egypt fantastic monuments were built by the kings – built with the labor of thousands of slaves. And these slaves were God's chosen people, the children of Israel.

Many times the Egyptians were cruel to their slaves. They beat them to make them work harder. The Israelites prayed that God would deliver them from this hard life, and God, hearing their prayers, prepared to take them out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan.

First of all God chose a leader for his people, a man by the name of Moses. Moses was a man whom the Lord could trust, and a man who trusted in the Lord.

Moses was to be used by God to deliver His people from the power of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Moses appeared before the king and boldly began telling him what God had planned for the children of Israel. God wanted Pharaoh to let His people go.

At first the king was scornful of Moses. God? Who was God to tell him what to do? After all, he was the great Pharaoh of Egypt!

Moses warned Pharaoh that unless the children of Israel were set free God would send great plagues upon the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh refused to listen.

On one occasion the Lord turned all the water in the land to blood. The air was filled with the stench of dead fish. And there was no water to drink anywhere. But Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

Another time God caused the land of Egypt to be overrun with frogs – frogs in the streets, frogs in the houses, frogs in their beds, frogs everywhere! But Pharaoh's heart was as hard as before.

On another occasion flies were sent by the millions to torment the Egyptians, and still the king would not give up. But God continued to deal with Pharaoh to let His people go.

Finally the king had had enough. He called for Moses and told him to take the children of Israel, and get out of Egypt, and stay out.

That was a happy day for the children of Israel! They were free at last! God had heard their prayers.

For 430 years these people and their parents before them had been held in bondage in the land of Egypt. Now they gathered up their belongings and were ready to go.

Soon they were following their leader out into the desert. A hot, hard journey was ahead, but the people were happy. They were heading for a new life and a land of plenty.

What a sight they were! A whole nation of people, hundreds of thousands of them with their cattle and all their belongings strung out across the desert.

One day something happened that caused a murmur of fear to run down through the column of people. They pointed, and they whispered. What strange thing did they see?

A huge cloud had appeared before them, and such a cloud they had never seen before. The people stood still in wonder.

Then Moses said to the people, *“Don’t be afraid. The Lord God Himself is appearing unto us as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. And we know by the cloud that the Lord is with us and is leading the way.”*

Up to now the Israelites had been headed directly toward the land of Canaan. If they went on that way they would soon come into the land of the Philistines. That would mean just one thing – war!

The Lord knew that if His people should see war, they’d become discouraged and want to go back to Egypt. So one day God spoke to Moses and told him to change the direction of travel.

The Lord wanted the people to turn south toward the Red Sea.

Moses may not have understood why, but he trusted in the Lord. And so he gave the order for the people to turn toward the Red Sea. The people didn’t understand it either, but they did what their leader told them to do.

Pharaoh had spies watching and of course they were ready to report every move the children of Israel made.

When the spies told Pharaoh that the Israelites were changing their direction of travel, the king got to thinking about the matter. He got out his maps and began to study the situation.

Pharaoh was already sorry that he had freed all those slaves that had served him so long and now they were walking right into a perfect trap!

Soon they would find themselves with no place to go. There would be mountains on each side, and in front of them would be the Red Sea. If he were to bring his armies in from the rear...! Well...

That’s what he decided to do. And the armies of Egypt moved out across the desert and traveled as fast as they could.

The Egyptians raised up quite a dust. When the Israelites saw the dust clouds far in the distance, they knew right away what that meant – the Egyptians were coming after them!

The children of Israel were afraid, and they were angry with Moses for having brought them out into the wilderness. They forgot that God was with them.

The people cried out to Moses that they would rather have stayed in Egypt as slaves than to be slain out here in the desert by the Egyptian army.

But Moses wasn't upset. He was perfectly calm, and he said to the people, "*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.*"

Then something strange happened. Pharaoh's soldiers saw it too but they thought it was a cloud – a great dark cloud moving in between their camp and the camp of Israel.

On the side of the Egyptians the cloud made everything so dark that they thought they'd better wait till morning to recapture their slaves.

But on the other side of the cloud it was different! To the children of Israel it was a pillar of fire. They could see everything very clearly, and the light showed...

...they were trapped! Hemmed in by mountains and the Red Sea! Any minute the Egyptians would come riding down on them and there was no place to go! Why had God allowed this terrible thing to happen to them?

As the people watched, Moses their leader walked apart from them right up to the edge of the sea.

Then Moses did something that God had told him to do. He lifted up his rod and a strong wind began to blow and the waters began to part.

Before long the wind had cleared a path right through the middle of the sea. And though the children of Israel were frightened, they followed their leader in between those huge walls of water.

All night long the children of Israel marched through the sea on the path that the Lord had made for them, and finally the last person arrived safely on the other side.

When the Pharaoh, back in his camp, was told that somehow the Israelites were getting away, he shouted the orders to pursue them at once.

In no time at all the entire Egyptian army was in pursuit, and they followed the Israelites right into the passage prepared in the sea.

Just about then, the Lord cause all sorts of things to happen. The wheels came off the chariots, there was confusion and panic in the ranks of the Egyptian armies.

Pharaoh's soldiers were terrified. "*The Lord is fighting against us,*" they said. "*Let's turn back before it's too late.*"

But it was already too late. God told Moses to stretch out his rod again over the sea...

...and the chariots, the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh were covered. Not one of them escaped!

So it was that all of Pharaoh's armies – because they knowingly and wilfully acted against the will of God – were destroyed in the midst of the Red Sea.

But Moses and the people sang a song of praise, and gave thanks to God for the miraculous way He had delivered them from their enemies.

The story of the Red Sea doesn't belong just to the past. It has a message for today.

Egypt is a picture of the world, and slavery represents the bondage of sin.

The Bible tells us that it took the power of God to deliver the children of Israel from the

bondage of Egypt. And it takes the power of God today to deliver people from the slavery of sin.

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4,5)

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