

File No. 28

EXODUS 13:17 – 15:21

Exodus 13:1–16; Psalm 105:37–39

CROSSING THE RED SEA

(SBS Bk1 Story No 40 & 41)

Story Notes.

Exodus 13

Israel was leaving Egypt when God told Moses that all their first-born belonged to him. It was the death of Pharaoh's (and Egypt's) firstborn that finally moved him to release the Israelites. The Israelites were grateful because their own sons had been 'passed over' or spared. This was the opportunity for God to tell them who they were — the 'my son' nation. They were to keep the festival of unleavened bread that commemorated this. God's ownership of animals was expressed by sacrificing the firstborn of each animal. Sacrifice of humans, from Abraham's time, was prohibited, and so God's ownership of Israel was to be expressed by the redemption of the firstborn with an animal (and later, also, with the service of the Levites). That is, an animal would die in place of each firstborn son. As this was done, and as it was explained to the firstborn sons, Israel would begin to appreciate the power of blood spilt instead of theirs. Each generation would be tutored in the power of redemption by blood.

We are not told that Israel ever chose to leave Egypt. God was concerned that they would change their minds unless he led them in a way that would bind them to him. Israel was ready for battle but the battle would be God's. He was personally with them in the fire and cloud so that they could travel night and day.

Exodus 14

God again hardened Pharaoh's heart so that his name would be honoured in the world. Moses told the people not to be afraid. God told Moses to move Israel forward and lift up his rod for the opening of the sea. God was clearly Commander in Chief, night watchman and lone soldier in this victory and Israel was obligated to confess that God was God and that Moses was his servant.

Exodus 15

The Lord's glorious triumph moved Moses and his people to sing. God had become the strength and salvation of this people. He was their God and his name was 'the Lord' (or Yahweh). Pharaoh, who had determined the life of this people before, had proved to be no match for the power of this Lord.

All this led Moses to ask if there was any god like the Lord. Israel knew that it was not their might or their initiative that had saved them but the God of holy love. He would lead them to his holy home — probably an anticipation of the temple in the promised land.

Christians have seen God's mighty deeds in the coming of Jesus, his death and resurrection. As with Israel, God is eager that we rely on his saving power through Christ (Heb. 3:5-14).

© Grant Thorpe 1999