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THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

– EXODUS 14:13-27. – JUNE 16. –

Golden Text: – "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hands of the Egyptians: and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore." – Exodus 14:30.

THE tenth plague, the death of all their first-born, convinced the Egyptians of the advisability of getting rid of the Hebrews. Forthwith they were as anxious to have the people go from them as they previously had been anxious to retain them. They now helped them and urged them, and when the Israelites asked for (in the text "borrowed") mementos, such as jewels, etc., they gave to them, urging their departure, and probably feeling that with this generosity they were to some extent making good for the long years of compulsory labor they had exacted. By preconcerted arrangement, the Hebrews quickly gathered to Succoth, en route for Palestine, nearly two millions of them, with flocks and herds which must have been of quite large numbers. If it seems impossible to us that the people should depart so suddenly, it is well that we remember that they had been waiting and preparing for the auspicious moment when Pharaoh should say that they might go. It should be remembered, too, that the people of that time, and to this day the people of that land, are much less encumbered by what we would consider necessities. The fellaheen of the Egyptians and the Arabs of the desert think [R3997 : page 155] nothing of lying down to sleep for the night by the roadside, wrapped in their outer garments, sometimes with a stone for a pillow as did Jacob. Stanley mentions a somewhat similar case, saying:

"In illustration of the event, a sudden retreat is recorded of a whole nomadic people – 400,000 Tartars – under cover of a single

night, from the confines of Russia into their native deserts, as late as the close of the last century."

Bishop C. H. Fowler offers a helpful comment, as follows:

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"In our own times, in this very century, we have witnessed an exodus from near that very land of Goshen where the Israelites dwelt. Mohammed Ali wished to manufacture silk, so he planted Jerusalem with mulberry trees and attracted Syrians from Damascus and Bedouin Arabs from Arabia, to whom he gave fertile pasture lands and freedom from taxation and military practice. They prospered and multiplied for many years. After the death of Mohammed Ali an attempt was made to tax and conscript them. Protestations were disregarded; therefore in one night the whole population, with their herds and flocks, moved away to their kinsfolk to the east of Egypt, leaving their homes empty and the valley a desolation, in which condition it was when De Lesseps dug his fresh-water canal."

The hosts of the Israelites first moved northward and eastward to Etham, then turning about went southward. This has the appearance of vacillation on the part of Moses, the leader, and on the part of God, his director. But we may be sure that known unto the Lord are all his ways, and hence that this movement was of design. The original intention probably was to follow the usual route out of Egypt to Palestine through the land of the Philistines, but the people were in no condition to battle with the latter. Another route would have been through the desert, but it would have been almost impossible because of their numbers and their flocks, and the fact that there would have been no pasturage, a deficiency of water, etc.

A BRIGHT CLOUD – A DARK CLOUD

They were guided south by the Lord directly by a cloud which was bright at night and dark in the daytime, affording them a measure of shelter from the heat of the sun. This phenomenon would probably not be noticed by the Egyptians and others, but was recognized by the Israelites because of their instructions, and because they had learned to have confidence in God as their leader. It was not, we are sure, anything like what some have pictured it – so radical a violation of nature as to be a demonstrated miracle. It was present with the people through all their wanderings in the wilderness for forty years, and was an evidence of the Lord's special care over them, and should have been a great aid to their faith. Only when they had finally crossed Jordan into Canaan was this phenomenon discontinued.

While following the narrative of Israel's deliverance and divine guidance, spiritual Israel must not overlook the fact that our deliverance from the world, symbolized by Egypt, is a still more wonderful one. As we under the Lord's providence began our escape from the power of the world, the flesh and the Adversary, there are different ways of escape possible, some more and some less favorable. Left to ourselves we might choose the wrong way of the Philistines, where the battles would be too hard for us, or the way of the desert, where we would be discouraged and famished. It is for us to look for the Lord's providences in our affairs at this time, and to find them guiding us, sheltering us from the heat of persecution and tribulation and trial, and again at other times enlightening us, refreshing us in the dark seasons. And this leading of divine providence is intended to be ours so long as we are of the true Israel of God, until we pass over Jordan into heavenly Canaan and need such special providences no further. Blessed are those whose faith is awake and on the alert, and who discern the **[R3997 : page 156]** Lord's favors which the world will not discern, and which only those in

the right attitude of mind can appreciate. O, Lord, help us more and more to appreciate thy leadings, thy providences, and to trust to thy wisdom in all of life's affairs, until thereby we shall be guided by thy Word and thy grace to the heavenly Canaan and its rest!

ENTANGLED IN THE LAND

The Israelites took the change of journey from northeast to south with full confidence because of their recognition of the leading of the Lord in the cloud that was dark by day and bright by night. But the Egyptians viewed the matter differently. Several days had now elapsed, their mourning for the first-born was ended, and they began to think of the loss they had sustained. The fact that the Israelites were probably efficient servants, the fact that the Egyptians had been accustomed to using them in their own interests for a long time, and that the people were without military qualifications and arms, suggested to the Egyptians that it would be an easy matter to overtake them, to turn them back again – to say, Now you have had a few days as you desired, turn back again into the old lines. As they perceived the changed course of the Israelites, first northeast and then south, they concluded that they were entangled in the land – that is to say, that they were lost, did not know where they were going. Indeed this would be the natural conclusion, for as we look upon the map we find that they were marching to the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, whereas they wished really to go to the opposite side, to enter Palestine. We can imagine the Egyptians saying, "Poor, foolish people! they were far better with us even at hard bondage than free; they know not what to do; they will scatter by and by, and the majority doubtless will come back to us anyway." Selfishness may even have suggested that it was their duty to hold them in restraint – to turn them back again to be the bond-servants of the Egyptians. The Egyptians had not yet learned the lesson that it was the God of Israel they had to contend with. Neither, perhaps,

had the Israelites sufficiently learned that it was God who was bringing them forth and not themselves and not Moses.

The hosts of the Israelites had by this time gotten well to the westward of the Bitter Lakes, which lengthen out the northernmost tongue of the Red Sea, when the word reached them that Pharaoh's six hundred chariots were coming. Terror spread throughout the mixed multitude: children cried, mothers wrung their hands and wept, and the strongest hearts of the Israelites were sore perplexed. As children to a father they came to Moses, saying, Is it because there was no grave-room in Egypt that you brought us away to die in the wilderness? Why did you thus – to bring us out of Egypt? Why did you not hearken to us when in Egypt we said, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? Would it not have been better for us to serve them than that we should die in the wilderness?

SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES ENTANGLED TOO

It is the same with many spiritual Israelites: having started to leave the world they are of insufficient faith, and when beset by temptations and difficulties they are inclined to wish they had never started in the better way and toward the freedom wherewith Christ makes free, and toward the Canaan rest and blessing which he has promised but which to them seems so far off – so utterly impossible to be reached. But Moses was of better faith and courage, as well he might be, because of his superior advantages every way. He represented our Leader, under whose direction and encouragement we have left the world behind. And so our Leader says to us, as Moses said to them, "Fear ye not! stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord which he will accomplish for you this day. And as for your enemies the Egyptians, whom ye fear, ye shall see them no more again forever." Evidently Moses was in very close touch with Jehovah when he could prophesy such an outcome in the face of such disastrous appearances. Similarly

we may have confidence in our Lord Jesus when he assures us that the power of the Adversary is limited, that it shall not go beyond the limitations of this present evil world; that tomorrow, in the Millennial age, we shall witness the overthrow of all the powers of evil. Moses added, "The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace." This is the promise to the spiritual Israelites – "Greater is he that is on our part than all they that be with them," however mighty they may appear: "If God be for us who can be against us?" – to ultimate success; therefore "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

THE ISRAELITES COMMANDED TO GO FORWARD

Before the Israelites was the tongue of the Red Sea, the chain of the Bitter Lakes; behind them the land of Egypt, and immediately in their rear Pharaoh's chariots and charioteers. The Israelites had not yet approached the water's edge. The command was that they should go forward, and no explanation was made of how the path would be opened for them through the waters. Not only was the faith of Moses demonstrated in the command, but the faith of the Israelites was also tested in their obediently going in the direction of the water. Is it not thus with spiritual Israelites? Does not the Lord sometimes allow adversity, difficulties, oppositions, to hedge us in? Does he not sometimes lead us by a way from which there seems to be no escape from some impending evil? This is the time to hearken to his voice and in faith to go forward, nothing doubting – trusting that he who has begun the good work in us will complete it unto the day of Jesus Christ – in the Millennial morning. **[R3998 : page 156]**

By divine direction Moses lifted up his rod and stretched out his hand over the sea, with the assurance that it would divide and furnish the necessary exit from their impending difficulties.

Those who read this narrative and in their minds imagine the Israelites at one side of the Red Sea, and an intervening fifty miles or so across to the other shore, and who further imagine that the waters of the sea opened and stood upright hundreds of feet in perpendicular walls on either side, while the Israelites first went downward to its bottom and then upward along its shores on the other side, are taxing their faith unnecessarily. Not that we are to doubt that if necessity arose God could wipe out the Red Sea entirely, but that it is not necessary to so suppose when circumstances and conditions are rightly understood. We may well suppose that God does not make his miracles more stupendous than necessary. Let us look at this miracle [R3998 : page 157] as it really occurred, and then see its reasonableness. The fact that we can understand the procedure should not make the matter any less a miracle in our estimation.

Let us have in mind the fact that the Red Sea at its upper end connects with a stretch of low country in which are a number of lakes, called Bitter Lakes, the water being brackish. At this time the Red Sea, which is merely a large lake, must have been very nearly connected with the Mediterranean Sea. At its upper end, the junction point with marshy lands and the Bitter Lakes, the water is at no great depth, so that at times when the tide is low cavalry have forded it – for instance, Napoleon and an escort, the former nearly losing his life on the occasion. When the tide comes in the condition of things is very different indeed, for the tide-rise at this point seems very high.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF A MIRACLE

The entire narrative of the lesson is in accord with what we have seen. A strong wind blew to the northward, and, cooperating with the tide, exposed a wide sandbar across which the Israelites passed in safety toward morning, aided by the light from the cloud, which at this time was to their northward and served as a

cloud of darkness to the Egyptians and of light to the Israelites, so that the pursuers had difficulty in the chase and probably were guided more by the sound of the confusion and flight of the Israelites than by anything else. It is entirely probable that the Egyptians were not aware that the tide and the wind had formed the sandbar, and that they were on it pursuing the Israelites. By the time the latter had reached the further bank of the sea, possibly two miles across, Moses again stretched forth his hand with his rod, and the wind's course again changed, the waters began to return, aided by the turning of the tide. Meantime the Egyptians in the midst of the sea found their chariot wheels choked by the soft sand, their horses sinking and struggling broke the wheels, there was general confusion, which held them until the tide was upon them and many if not all of them were drowned.

"An east or southeast wind arose and moved the upper water of the shallow bay toward the northwest, while probably a strong ebb tide set in at the same time and drew the lower water southwards, so that the bed of the sea was for a considerable space laid bare."

– Rawlinson.

"This was soon after the full moon of the vernal equinox, when there would be a very low ebb and a very high flood. The tide rises from five to seven feet opposite Suez, and from eight to nine feet when aided by strong winds, returning with unusual suddenness and power after the ebb."

– Newhall.

"M. DeLesseps mentioned to me the extraordinary facts of this kind which he had witnessed in storms which occurred at intervals of fifteen or twenty years. He had seen the northern end of the sea in places blown almost dry, and again had seen the waters driven far over the land toward the Bitter Lakes."

– President Bartlett.

"It is God's usual method to make the most of natural causes, to make the supernatural begin only where the natural ends." – Blakie.

"The coming of the wind at once, in connection with the symbolical act of Moses, is as much a miracle as the immediate division of the waters without the intervention of any secondary cause would have been."

– Taylor.

"The waters were a wall unto them on the right hand and on their left": this need not imply a perpendicular wall, but rather a protection, a shield on either side. The Israelites could go forward, knowing that their only danger was in the rear because the waters protected their flanks.

THE EGYPTIANS OVERTHROWN

If we still entertain the thought we once had that all mankind are on trial for eternal life in the present existence, and that all failure to gain eternal life means eternal torment, we would be inclined to wonder why Moses and the Israelites did not face about and begin to preach to the Egyptians. Indeed we might wonder why they left Egypt at all – why they did not become missionaries amongst them – why God delivered them from such a glorious opportunity for mission work. Then we would wonder, too, how Moses and the Israelites could rejoice in the thought that thousands of their enemies had gone to eternal torment. We thank God that in his providence he has enabled us to see the teachings of his Word more clearly. We see that the time had not yet come for the preaching of the Gospel, because the time had not yet come for the atonement for sin. Hence there could not be any offer of eternal life to the Egyptians, for Christ did not come to

die for man's sins for more than sixteen centuries later; and even after he came his work was not for the world, even as he prayed not for the world – "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." (John 17:9.) The work of gathering the elect is the first item on the divine program: with its consummation the present age will end, and then will begin the work for the world. Then those Egyptians and the Sodomites, with all the families of the earth, shall be blessed through Abraham's seed – Christ and the Church, the spiritual seed, and the natural Israelites, the earthly seed.

We see then, that as the Sodomites went down into death, so those hosts of the Egyptians went down into death, and all mankind go down into the great prison-house, the tomb, *sheol*, *hades*. We rejoice, too, that the Master says that surely "all that are in their graves shall come forth" (John 5:28,29) – the few, the faithful, into the perfection of life, the masses unto a time of trial and testing and opportunity in connection with judgments and disciplines, so that if obedient they may ultimately also attain everlasting life through the knowledge of God's dear Son and obedience to him. Remembering our Master's words, that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in that day of the world's judgment than for many who had greater enlightenment, we may wonder if it will not also be true that some of these Egyptian charioteers, who in blindness and selfishness pursued the Israelites, will not be found more excusable than some of the natural seed of Abraham whom Moses led out, but who, because of lack of faith, died in the wilderness. The overthrow of the Egyptian hosts at the hand of Moses prefigured the ultimate overthrow of the powers of evil and sin and bondage at the hands of Christ.

"THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB"

If evidence were necessary to disprove the claim of evolution – that the people of early times were one remove from monkeys – that proof would be found in the way the Israelites accepted the victory the Lord had given them in their [R3998 : page 158] own passage of the sea in safety and of the destruction therein of their pursuers and enemies. Did they riot in a carnival of vice? Did they have a war-dance with tom-toms? Quite to the contrary. Overflowing with religious sentiment, they gave thanks unto the Lord God, recognizing him as their Deliverer. Moses composed a hymn of praise in which the people joined, while Moses' sister Miriam and the singing women prepared a response to the various parts of the hymn of praise. Hebrew scholars have remarked on the evidence of the antiquity of the song of Moses, recorded in Exodus 15:1-20, some even noting the fact that a few of the words showed an intermingling of the Egyptian language. It is further authenticated by the reference made to it in the book of Psalms, where the entire matter of the deliverance of the people and the overthrow of their enemies in the sea is graphically described by the sweet singer of Israel. (Psa. 106:7-12.) The incident and the Song of Moses are further corroborated by our Lord in his last message to the Church, in which he represents in symbol a certain class of his followers experiencing a great deliverance in the end of this age and singing, "The song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb." – Rev. 15:2,3.

If it was appropriate, as we all admit that it was, that the Israelites should give glory to God for their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, much more is it appropriate that spiritual Israel should recognize the still greater deliverance from the power of Satan and the thralldom of sin, accomplished for us through the blood of the Lamb of God who died for our sins. If the illiterate people who had been in a measure of slavery for a long period and who had not the advantages of this Gospel age were

prompted to give thanks to the Lord, how much more should we, who have tasted of his grace and goodness, show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2:9.) What wonder, then, that the Scriptures everywhere refer to the Lord's people as being ministers, servants, of the Truth, and declare that the Lord has **[R3999 : page 158]** not only lifted our feet from the horrible pit and miry clay of sin and death, but has additionally "put into our mouths a new song, even the loving-kindness of our God." – Psa. 40:2,3.

This song can now be sung by us who can exercise faith in the Lord, in his Word, in his providence, but it is not its complete fulfilment: that will be attained when all the people of God shall have been found – when the Lord's mercy during the Millennial age shall have opened the blind eyes of the world, unstopped the deaf ears, caused the knowledge of the Lord to fill the whole earth, and gathered all who are truly the Lord's to himself, and during the Millennial age shall have lifted them out of the bondage of sin and death and brought them into full harmony with the divine standard by the processes of restitution, according as it is written – There shall "be times of restitution of all things which God hath promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21.) Then will be the great fulfilment of this passage of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of the enemies of the Lord and his people. It will be then, at the end of the Millennial age, that Satan and all who are on his side, enemies of righteousness, will be forever destroyed, and at the same time all who love righteousness and hate iniquity and avail themselves of the Lord's favors, privileges, will then be saved to the powers of an eternal life, under the leadership of the great antitypical Moses, as it is written – "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren like unto me [Moses]; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that the soul that will not obey

that Prophet shall be destroyed from amongst the people." – Acts 3:22,23.
