

Salvation from God: *Moses and the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-31)*

“... the exodus served to typify that exodus achieved by Jesus Christ for people of faith so that it is a meaningful event for the church as well as for Israel.”
~ Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 58

I. Investigation: An Examination of Exodus 14:1-31

A. Introduction

With nearly 125 explicit Old Testament references to the Exodus, it is no surprise that “the centrality of the Exodus was retained throughout the entire Old Testament and established Israel’s identity” (Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 131). God’s delivery of Israel from oppression in Egypt becomes the great saving event in the Old Testament and foreshadows a future exodus—salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ. As noted by one scholar: “Because the death of Jesus prefigured in his baptism, in which the water ordeal symbolism of the Red Sea passage was renewed (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1ff), we may say with biblical propriety that Jesus, like Moses, leads his people through the sea of death” (Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 189).

B. Trapped by the Egyptian Forces (14:1-14)

vv. 1-3 - The illogical path of the Israelites leaves the impression they are disoriented and hopelessly lost. From Pharaoh’s viewpoint, the Israelites’ are trapped, but from the Lord’s perspective, it is the perfect location for Him to display His glory!

v. 4 - Scholars have debated how a dead Egyptian can know Yahweh is the LORD. Some scholars suggest this reference to the Egyptians speak to the entire nation collectively (i.e., “the entire nation of Egypt will know that Yahweh is the LORD”). Other scholars argue that this reference addresses not only their lives on earth, but life beyond the grave (i.e., “in this life, and beyond, they will know that Yahweh is the LORD”).

vv. 5-9 - The New Kingdom dynasties (1550-1069 BC) were known for their imperial glory and military prowess. One scholar notes the following concerning the Egyptians: “They were a thoroughly militarized society, and they had certainly come to believe that an aggressive foreign policy was the best defense against any future humiliation at the hands of outsiders” (Garrett, *Exodus*, 388).

vv. 10-12 - Josephus states that not only did the Israelites rebuke Moses, they also sought to stone him (*Ant* 2.15.4).

v. 11 - The double negative in the Hebrew is for emphasis (cf. Num 12:2). Not only have the Israelites failed to account for the Lord’s powerful hand as seen in the 10 plagues, they have failed to remember their plight in the land of Egypt. Fear, anger, and despair eclipses a proper view of the Almighty God—a God who had promised to bring them to the land He swore to their fathers (cf. 13:11).

vv. 13-14 - "Moses's comforting words to the people, 'Do not be afraid' (v. 13), are the same words even Israel's great ancestors have needed to hear when they have their backs against a wall: Abraham (Gen. 15:1), Isaac (26:24), Jacob (46:3), and Hagar too (21:17)" (Hamilton, *Exodus*, 216).

C. Delivered by God (14:15-31)

v. 15 - Now the Lord asks Moses a question. Why do you think the Lord rebukes Moses and not the entire nation of Israel?

vv. 16-18 - No scientific explanation can explain the parting of the Red Sea. Indeed, the Lord removes any question related to who delivered the Israelites (cf. v. 30). As noted by one prominent Old Testament scholar, Walt Kaiser, "There is no way to 'water down' the text to fit natural explanations; the report clearly shows a miraculous work of God making a path through the sea—a path that had to be as wide as half a mile in order for the many people and their animals to cross between about 2:00am and 6:00am ("Exodus," in *EBC*, 389).

Recognizing the parting of the Red Sea was solely the hand of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah writes, "Did you not dry up the sea, the waters of the great deep? Did you not make a path through the depths of the sea, so those delivered from bondage could cross over?" (Isaiah 51:10).

vv. 19-22 - The Israelites could rest in knowing the Lord promised they will be delivered, the angel of God will go before them, and the pillar of cloud will dwell with them.

vv. 23-28 - According to Psalm 77:16-19, God caused a rainstorm, lightning, thunder, and an earthquake. The term for "encumbered" in verse 23 normally means "take off, remove", suggesting the wheels of the chariots "broke off" in the mud (cf. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 213). Other scholars argue the wheels were simply bogged down in the mud. Whatever the situation, the Egyptians recognized that the Lord was fighting against them!

The price of Pharaoh's hardened heart was costly. It cost him his first-born son, his work force, his elite army, and his own life.

vv. 29-31 - The battle was over. Without firing a shot, the world's best armed forces laid as corpses on the shore.

Observe how the Israelites responded:

One commentator writes, “Why did God part the waters of the Red Sea? The Answer is very simple—an answer that explains the whole exodus. Indeed, it is the answer that explains why God does everything that he has ever done, is doing right now, or will ever do. The answer is the glory of God. He did it all for his own glory” (Ryken, *Exodus*, 396).

II. Intersect

A. As believers, we need to rejoice in our miraculous salvation! Our salvation was obtained through an all-powerful, loving, and sovereign God who rescued us from the enemy.

Romans 8:38-39 -

B. Even when circumstances fail to make sense, God is always in control. In his commentary on Exodus, Garrett writes, “. . . the path of obedience can itself seem like a kind of folly, but it is the folly of the cross, in which the weakness and stupidity of God is stronger and wiser than earthly power or common sense (1 Cor. 1:19-30)” (*Exodus*, 388).

1 Corinthians 1:22-25 -

C. Those who resist and reject God will ultimately abandon wisdom and morality.

Romans 1:21-23 -

“The Lord forbade the Israelites to forget what things He had done; how He had cast out nations, taken them from bondage; for this end, that it might be remembered.” ~ Paul Bayne