*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 13 - 18

*Exodus Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen*

**Monday, July 13 Exodus 13:17-22**

*“Pharaoh finally let the people go”*

Finally, the Israelites leave Egypt! The story takes an unexpected twist, however. God leads the Israelites on a path that they may not have expected – the longer route rather than the shorter. The reason stated is that the shorter route will bring them into military conflict with the Philistines. God does not want the Israelites to become discouraged and change their minds, so he has them avoid this region entirely.

The journey out of Egypt does not commence without a look backward: Moses remembers to take the bones of Joseph with them, thus fulfilling the patriarch’s wish that his bones be taken to Canaan when the Israelites leave Egypt. God delivers Israel from Egypt not because they have somehow earned it, but because he has a promise to keep to the patriarchs. The look forward in these verses is signaled by the presence of God in the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night which will be with the Israelites throughout their forty year desert journey before finally entering the Promised Land.

*You, Lord, are present with us through your Holy Spirit who lives in us. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 14 Exodus 14:1-4**

*“They will know that I am the Lord”*

One would think that after all the Israelites have gone through that a speedy, painless, undelayed trip to the Promised Land would be in order. But God is not finished with the Egyptians yet. He commands what by common military standards is a foolish strategy: March the Israelites toward the sea, leaving them no escape route. Then entice Pharaoh to follow the Israelites so he and Pharaoh can engage in one final battle, one that will show Pharaoh who is truly God.

As has happened before with the plagues, Pharaoh’s heart will once again be hardened by God’s actions. When God said, “Let my people go . . . or else,” Pharaoh stubbornly replied: “Do your worst.” When God did, Pharaoh temporarily relented but then his stubbornness won out and he refused to obey God. Finally, with the tenth plague, Pharaoh let the people go – actually, he “drove them out” of his land. But, showing that his heart has not changed, when he sees the dilemma of the seemingly trapped Israelites, he will chase after them to bring them back.

*Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that you are Lord. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 15 Exodus 14:5-14**

*“The Egyptians chased after them”*

Pharaoh musters all his power and chases after the Israelites, using the best and brightest of Egypt’s troops. The irony, of course, is that Pharaoh has gone to fight Israel’s God, the God of the plagues, with mere chariots, horsemen and troops. These may be the best of the best, but they will not prevail.

This turn of events comes as a great shock to the Israelites. It is clear to us readers that Pharaoh’s pursuit will end badly for him, but Israel is not made privy to God’s plan. Having thought that Egypt was defeated and no longer a problem, it is no wonder that seeing the Egyptians in hot pursuit terrifies them. But, in their terror, they forget about the power of God.

One would think that the experiences of the ten plagues would have convinced them of the ability of God to save them from yet another attempt by Pharaoh to harm them, but instead of trusting in God they question God’s purpose in bringing them out of Egypt. “We would be better off if we had never left,” they claim. In response, Moses reassures them: “God will fight for you.”

*You fight for us, Lord, even when our circumstances cause us to doubt you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 13 - 18

*Exodus Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen*

**Thursday, July 16 Exodus 14:15-22**

*“Israel walked through the Sea”*

In the face of a seemingly hopeless situation, God will do something that must have been completely unexpected. He tells Moses to raise his staff so that the water will be divided and the Israelites can walk through on dry ground. Once again, as in the plagues, the elements obey Moses’ command to bring deliverance for the Israelites but punishment for the Egyptians.

The ultimate goal of the Egyptians’ tragic end is that (1) God’s glory will be displayed, and (2) the Egyptians will know that “I am the Lord.” It may be difficult for people living in the modern world to understand how God’s glory is displayed by killing his enemies. In fact, passages such as this have led many to think of the God of the Old Testament as a God of “wrath” while the God of the New Testament is a God of grace and love. Of course, even a cursory knowledge of both Testaments quickly dissolves such a view, since there is plenty of grace in the Old Testament, even toward the enemies of God, and a good bit of wrath in the New Testament. God is not as predictable as we would like him to be.

*We believe in who you have revealed yourself to be, Lord, not in who we think you should be. Amen.*

**Friday, July 17 Exodus 14:23-31**

*“The waters of the Sea rushed back”*

The sea is parted and the Egyptians follow in pursuit, but God throws them into confusion by causing their chariots to develop some kind of wheel trouble – most likely either that their wheels come off or that they get stuck in the muddy road that once was the bottom of the Red Sea. God’s action is aimed at their symbol of power – their mighty chariots – which earlier had struck fear into the Israelites. There they are, stuck in the middle of the sea, unable to proceed or retreat, and it finally dawns on them that they are, literally, in over their heads: “Let’s get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.”

The sea comes crashing down on the Egyptians and the entire army is killed. Egypt has finally paid the ultimate price for the ultimate transgression. Their king has been contending with God, thinking that he was his equal. He set out to destroy God’s beloved son, Israel. Now, finally, once mighty Egypt understands that this was a bad mistake. The washing up on the shore of the dead soldiers is proof to the Israelites that their escape is now complete.

*Worldly powers, Lord, are no match for your power. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 18 Exodus 15:1-21**

*“They sang this song to the Lord”*

Singing has universal appeal. The Creator made us that way. We sing for different reasons. Sometimes we are happy, other times miserable. Sometimes we know why we sing, other times it just comes out. We sing to remember good times and to take our minds off bad times. Singing changes our moods as well as simply reflecting them. What we sing can have a tremendous influence on how we subsequently think or behave. Song can enter areas of our inner self that prose and logic cannot.

What we see in Exodus 15 is worship, pure and simple. The song of Moses and Meriam and the Israelites was written down so it could be pondered, studied and reflected on – and not just for the ancient Israelites, but for us who have the Bible before us today. The song is the inspired Word of God and it gives us a glimpse of who God is and therefore, what our proper relationship with him should be. The song is not focused on what the Israelites have done but on what God has done – it is sung to the praise of his mighty acts.

*In worship, Lord, we sing to you and about you. Amen.*