

Exodus 14:19-31

As I've been studying the book of Exodus lately, I've been looking to Christ more and more. We see as much as we understand. I can tell what my wife is thinking just by the look on her face or a certain gesture, and vice versa. In the same way, the more we know our Bridegroom, Christ Jesus, the more we will see Him in detail. Why is it important to look to Christ? Because He is the life, the eternal life. No living thing in this world has everlasting life. Every living thing will eventually decay. They have death in it. So we need to look to Him to live. Even little children should learn to look to Jesus, through the Word, because no one is immune from death. Children really need to memorize the Scriptures from a young age. Even adults can really benefit from doing this now.

There isn't a book in the Bible that isn't amazing, but Exodus is such a spectacular, amazing book, and this scene today is so famous. Decades ago, I watched the movie *The Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner, and I was so impressed with it. Has anyone seen it?... Later, the Prince of Egypt animation depicted the splitting of the Red Sea more beautifully and magnificently than any other movie. Anyone seen it? Here's a quiz for you. In the Prince of Egypt cartoon movie, there's a scene where Moses strikes the waters of the Red Sea with his staff. Do you think that's in the Bible or not? Please raise your hand if you don't think it's in the Bible. In the Bible, Moses just holds out his hand with the staff.

The book of Exodus shows a microcosm of how God is building His people and nation, calling his people out of the world to build a spiritual tabernacle, that is, a church united to Christ. On a personal level, it shows us what the Christian life is all about. The purpose of leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, that is, crossing the world, and entering the wilderness is for the community of faith to build a tabernacle, so that we can eventually enter into Christ, the true tabernacle, and enjoy Him in fullness.

Studying Exodus made me reflect on my own life. What led me to believe in Jesus when I was truly dead in my sins? It was the redeeming grace of Christ, the Passover. The Lord has been patient with me, with my many mistakes and faults, picking me up when I fell, and leading me with mercy and love. As Isaiah 42:3 says, He hasn't "[broken] off a bent reed or put out a dying flame" (Contemporary English Version). I believe He has led us through the wilderness journey of our lives with pillars of cloud and fire, and He is leading us now too.

The Israelites were led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to the Red Sea. The pillars of cloud and fire foreshadow the grace of Christ. God doesn't just take us out of Egypt and tell us to go wherever we want to go but the Lord leads us. In verse 19, the angel or messenger of God, or "malak" in Hebrew, is Christ.

The pillar of fire is the light of Christ, the Word, as Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (ESV). The pillars of cloud and fire also represent the twofold work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit drenches us with the Spirit of Christ and shines in us.

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When did these pillars of cloud and fire appear? They appeared on the journey when the Israelites left Egypt. When they were under tyranny in Egypt, the pillars were hidden, because the world was in the darkness. You can't see them when you're spiritually blindfolded. It's like even the Israelites didn't really know that Moses was their leader sent by God.

Specifically, the cloud and the Red Sea refer to baptism. Paul the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." The Red Sea means water baptism; the cloud means the invisible baptism of the Spirit of God. Baptism, immersing in water, means death. When did you die? When you were baptized into Moses under the cloud and in the sea. Since Moses foreshadows Christ, you died when you were baptized into Christ. You died in him when He died on the cross. That dead person is called the old self. So the event of passing through the Red Sea is the event of our death on the cross.

The Red Sea means also the sea of the worldly "passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24), "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) that keep us in the world, that we cannot cross in our own strength. How do we cross over? In Exo 14:16, God says to Moses, "Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water." The staff is a mysterious wood, but not like the magic wand in Harry Potter. It foreshadows the cross of Christ. The same goes for wood and staves in the Old Testament. God could have just parted the sea if he wanted. So why did he tell Moses to lift up the staff? God did it to show how great the future wooden cross of Christ would be.

The Israelites cross the sea, which has become a dry land, with the east wind blowing all night. How difficult it is to walk through the sea while watching and listening to the furious movement of the waters, with great waves on both sides! These walls of water are the fleshly thoughts and sinful nature that still threaten us, but if you follow Moses, the law of God, they will not kill you but become walls on both sides.

Moses typifies Christ, so Jesus is the new Moses and the new law. In Romans 8:2, Paul says, "the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." This "law of the Spirit of life" is a person. Who is it? Yes, it's Christ. He's the new law written on our hearts. So when we've received Jesus Christ, we've received Him as the new law. He's speaking to us from within. Why did we choose God over the world? Because we heard the voice of Christ, the new law, working in us. Have you ever walked past the walls of buildings with the neon lights in a big city and envied the world? When the walls of water in Egypt say, "I'm so fancy, what are you?" a follower of the new Moses is not affected by it.

Now, the thing is, Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen chased them into the middle of the sea, which symbolizes Satan's power of darkness. You may think you chose Jesus and believed in him, but you came to believe because the Lord broke the devil's schemes that were holding you back from believing in Jesus. The Lord buried them in the Red Sea. Pharaoh's mighty army is also our pride. In fact, Pharaoh was our old self in league with Satan. The other face of pride is

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the inferiority complex. We've been dragged around by pride sometimes, and by inferiority complexes other times, but God buried them.

Our selves must end up at the cross of Christ as that army was buried, with all our sins. The cross of Christ is a cosmic black hole. It swallows up all sin, death, and darkness. This includes not only past sins, but future sins as well. What is the greatest sin of all? Not knowing the Lord. We are the ones who crucified Jesus. In Acts 2:36-37, after receiving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem—They were devout Jews who had come from all over the world. He told them that they had "crucified" Jesus. When they heard this, "they were cut to the heart" and said to the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Neither they nor we in the present were involved in Jesus' death on the cross, but they and we were just as guilty of separation from God as all of humanity in the first Adam in terms of the eternal present.

The Lord also knows that we will sin in the future. Even knowing that, he washes our feet beforehand. When did Jesus wash Peter's feet? He didn't say, "Hey Peter, I'm not going to wash your feet today but after you deny me tomorrow, and then after I die and rise from the dead, I'll wash them." That's not how the gospel works. He washed them beforehand, knowing that Peter would deny him the next day. This is amazing. Of course, we should always repent, as Peter did. But if we say that we're forgiven because **we prayed** for it, that's another human merit. We've received forgiveness as a gift from God's compassion, so of course I'm leaning on that compassion to repent. Forgiveness has come. That's the mystery of the gospel, that's the mystery of compassion.

The Septuagint translates Pharaoh's chariots as chariots drawn by three horses. Some of you have horses or have had horses. They're beautiful and lovely on their own, but the image of a horse changes dramatically depending on who's riding it. Imagine an armed soldier chasing after you. A single horseman would be scary, and a chariot with just one horse would be scary. According to Exodus 14:7, there were more than 600 of them. Three horses times 600 chariots, that's at least 1800 horses. Imagine the sound of those chariot wheels and the threatening shouts of the armies. That's a lot of force. This chariot of three horses is a triple threat to terrorize us, to drive us to despair, and to drive us to death.

Satan still comes to us in this persistent way, saying, "Are you good? No, you are not." He sends his demons to tempt us to various sins. Satan's job is to convince you that you are not the holy person who is in Christ, so he tries to take away your faith, which is a Christian necessity. Of course we ourselves are not good, but we must proclaim the gospel by faith.

1 Corinthians 1:30 is the gospel we need to hold onto: "because of [God] you are **in** Christ Jesus." Not only does Paul say that the troublesome Corinthians are **in** Christ Jesus, but he declares that Christ Jesus "**became** to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption." If God says "I have given you these things," we don't know if we've received them or not. However, Christ Jesus Himself **was made** unto us wisdom, righteousness,

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sanctification, and redemption. When we received Christ Jesus, wisdom, redemption, righteousness, and sanctification came into us. So when Satan says, "Are you holy?" we can say, "Yes, I am holy. Why? Because it's not me that's holy, it's Christ in me." When you are challenged by Satan, these words proclaimed today will suddenly ring in your ears.

The Red Sea incident gives us a deeper realization of the message of the cross. Beyond understanding the cross only as something that washed away our sins, we need to see that Christ's cross is what brought us across the world. We can't go back to Egypt. Done. That's one of the deep meanings of the cross. Forgiving our sins, breaking the power of sin, putting to death our old self, the world ending there and us dying to the world, breaking the curse of the law, burying "hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world" (Colossians 2:8), crucifying "the flesh with its passions and desires," shedding His blood to give life, putting an end to the old creation, creating one new man, reconciling Gentiles and Jews in Him, etc... The list of things the cross accomplished is staggering.

The reason Christ became flesh was to put an end to sin and the old universe itself by putting it into his flesh. What sorrow and limitations the flesh brings to us. It's bitten by the old serpent of sin and poisoned by sin. It makes us do things we don't want to do. It's physically decaying, and one day it will die. But Christ took all of this into his flesh, put an end to it on the cross, rose from the dead, became a glorious new body, and reserved our new bodies for us who believe. This is the great gospel, that He became the "last Adam" of the old world (1 Corinthians 15:45), and in his resurrection, he became the second Adam of the newly created order (1 Corinthians 15:47), the new Adam of the new world. When we realize the message of the cross, our prayer changes: "Lord, make us no longer love the things of the world, but fill us with the things that are in You, Christ Jesus." Of course, we can pray under many different headings, but in the end, this should be the goal of every prayer.

Brothers and sisters, who have crossed the Red Sea, let us sing the thanksgiving of our salvation every day, as Moses and Miriam sang. No matter how hard Satan, already defeated, tries to steal your faith, no matter how sad, anxious, and worried you are, call on the name of the Lord. Lift up your hands with the cross staff of Christ in prayer and say, "Lord Jesus, fill me with your Spirit." Let us use the weapon of faith, and we will be drenched in the clouds of Christ's Spirit, illuminated by the pillar of fire, and fearlessly pass through the wilderness of life. Amen.