August 22, 2017

Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **16: Israel's Escape from Bondage**

 THE children of Israel had followed the directions given them of God; and while the angel of death was passing from house to house among the Egyptians, they were all ready for their journey and waiting for the rebellious king and his great men to bid them go.

 "And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.

 "And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians."

 The Lord revealed this to Abraham about four hundred years before it was fulfilled: "And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Genesis 15:13, 14.

 "And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle." The children of Israel went out of Egypt with their possessions, which did not belong to Pharaoh, for they had never sold them to him. Jacob and his sons took their flocks and cattle with them into Egypt. The children of Israel had become exceedingly numerous, and their flocks and herds had greatly increased. God had judged the Egyptians by sending the plagues upon them, and made them hasten His people out of Egypt with all that they possessed.

 "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph up with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

**The Pillar of Fire**

 "And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

 The Lord knew that the Philistines would oppose their passing through their land. They would say of them, They have stolen away from their masters in Egypt, and would make war with them. Thus God, by bringing them by way of the sea, revealed Himself a compassionate God as well as a God of judgment. The Lord informed Moses that Pharaoh would pursue them, and He directed him just where to encamp before the sea. He told Moses that He would be honored before Pharaoh and all his host.

 After the Hebrews had been gone from Egypt some days, the Egyptians told Pharaoh that they had fled and would never return to serve him again. And they mourned because they had permitted them to leave Egypt. It was a very great loss for them to be deprived of their services, and they regretted that they had consented to let them go. Notwithstanding all they had suffered from the judgments of God, they were so hardened by their continual rebellion that they decided to pursue the children of Israel and bring them back by force unto Egypt. The king took a very large army and six hundred chariots, and pursued after them, and overtook them while encamped by the sea.

 "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

 How soon the Israelites distrusted God! They had witnessed all His judgments upon Egypt to compel the king to let Israel go, but when their confidence in God was tested, they murmured, notwithstanding they had seen such evidences of His power in their wonderful deliverance. Instead of trusting in God in their necessity, they murmured at faithful Moses, reminding him of their words of unbelief which they uttered in Egypt. They accused him of being the cause of all their distress. He encouraged them to trust in God and withhold their expressions of unbelief, and they should see what the Lord would do for them. Moses earnestly cried to the Lord to deliver His chosen people.

**Deliverance at the Red Sea**

 "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." God would have Moses understand that He would work for His people--that their necessity would be His opportunity. When they should go as far as they could, he must bid them still go forward; that he should use the rod God had given him to divide the waters.

 "And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get Me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten Me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud of darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night."

 The Egyptians could not see the Hebrews, for the cloud of thick darkness was before them, which cloud was all light to the Israelites. Thus did God display His power to prove His people, whether they would trust in Him after giving them such tokens of His care and love for them, and to rebuke their unbelief and murmuring. "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." The waters rose up and stood, like congealed walls, on either side while Israel walked in the midst of the sea on dry ground.

 The Egyptian host was triumphing through that night that the children of Israel were again in their power. They thought there was no possibility of their escape; for before them stretched the Red Sea, and their large armies were close behind them. In the morning, as they came up to the sea, lo, there was a dry path, the waters were divided, and stood like a wall upon either side, and the children of Israel were halfway through the sea, walking on dry land. They waited awhile to decide what course they had better pursue. They were disappointed and enraged that, as the Hebrews were almost in their power, and they were sure of them, an unexpected way was opened for them in the sea. They decided to follow them.

 "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them, to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

 The Egyptians dared to venture in the path God had prepared for His people, and angels of God went through their host and removed their chariot wheels. They were plagued. Their progress was very slow, and they began to be troubled. They remembered the judgments that the God of the Hebrews had brought upon them in Egypt to compel them to let Israel go, and they thought that God might deliver them all into the hands of the Israelites. They decided that God was fighting for the Israelites, and they were terribly afraid and were turning about to flee from them, when "the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

 "And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses."

 As the Hebrews witnessed the marvelous work of God in the destruction of the Egyptians, they united in an inspired song of lofty eloquence and grateful praise.

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