

FEBRUARY 1

Exodus 13:17-15:18

Exodus 13:17-22

Vs. 17-18 The Lord led Israel, and in a way that made no sense to the Egyptians or to anyone else.

What we should think about as disciples is when God leads us in a way that makes no sense to others, He has His reasons. Our confidence should be in following Him, not in knowing why or being able to explain why He seems to be leading us into a dead-end.

Vs. 21-22 Introduced here is the cloud and the pillar of fire which will be with them for another 40 years. Reading about these signs is so easy, but their significance defies our imaginations in several ways. First, how incredible it must have been to have these every day and night. They must have been huge. Second, how incredible to see these every day and yet not trust God. It makes the rebellion of the people very strange. God might be right. There might be something very wrong with all of us that defies all reason. Sin is incredible in its depth and power in us.

Exodus 14

Vs. 1-4 Notice how God is still coaching Moses. He is explaining, step by step, what is going to happen.

At the end of this document, there is a map of the possible route of the Exodus, from [The Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), p. 253, that might help you to understand how God led them.

Beginning at Rameses, they went south and then up north. You can see the city of Migdol mentioned in v. 2. The Red Sea apparently was really the Reed Sea, that is today's Lake Ballah. I guess the words for "red" and "reed" are as similar in Hebrew as they are in English. The people were encamped facing across Lake Ballah toward Migdol. This must have given Pharaoh the confidence to act rashly, thinking the people were sheep lost in the wilderness.

Vs. 5-9 Pharaoh and his boys are mad. With a hardened heart, his foolishness is intensified to the point of complete irrationality. If they haven't beaten God yet, why do they think this is a good move? But now, the final step to Israel being without threat in the wilderness will be accomplished. With this next defeat, the Egyptian military will be reduced to a national police force just trying to rebuild and protect a ruined country.

Vs. 10-14 It is incredible to read these words from the people to Moses in light of all the acts of God's power they have seen. And then, there is that pillar of fire standing near them.

God says He will get glory from Pharaoh. When you read Romans 11, the issue of God "using" Pharaoh (and the unbelieving in general) comes up. And just to be fair, we all have a hard time imagining God twisting someone's mind to do His will without giving them a chance to believe. In all of what we understand and do not understand, all the conflicting thoughts of God's election, foreknowledge and our freewill will come together and will prove, as Paul says, "God's righteousness." In the angelic world God is in court and the accuser searches God's actions to see if He is playing according to the rules. I think this is why the angels attest to God's holiness. It's not because they're assigned this duty for our sake, (for great verses and great songs); but for them, and the issues at play in the angelic conflict, God's holiness and righteousness are important to them.

A key verse on this is Romans 9:22, *What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?* So here is my thought. What if God, in His foreknowledge, knew that a child to be born would never accept Him in faith and would always be in rebellion? In God's vast wisdom and planning and

foreknowledge, He could surely move events around that person and even use that person's responses to His purposes. Paul's point is that God would have a price to pay also, that is, enduring the rebellion of this person for 70 years. God could just "snuff him out." If you've been a school teacher or had a horrible tenant in a rental house, you'll know enduring this kind of rebellious person is not a delight. We think God can just "put this out of His mind," because He's in outer space or someplace, but I don't think so. God is here and I think sin seriously grieves God. We're just used to it.

Also, regarding freewill and God's ability to "direct" us, you wonder what rights we really have. For example, in a recent election, they did surveys on how different groups voted. There were the ethnic groups, and then gender groups and religious groups, but I never found one on how the prison population voted. I'm sure that would have been a substantial block of people, and it would be interesting to see what issues were important to them and, so, how they voted. Oh, that's right, they can't vote. They lost the right to vote because of their crimes. In all societies, those guilty of crimes lose rights and often their freedom. They have the basic rights (basic defined by the culture) but many freedoms are removed. We're "guilty" too, right?

Now, if you look at the entire scope of things biblically, that is, "in reality," our biggest foe is Satan, standing before God and proving, by what we do, that we deserve judgment and death. Whatever role Satan was supposed to have for good has been used by him for evil, giving him power when we mess up, like giving the board of directors the right to run the company because the true owner is in jail (and they put him there). Along with this, God had to save us, not violating any rules of righteousness and justice. Satan watches this. Yet God does have the right, since we are guilty before Him, to direct us and manage us just like you would direct people in prison who have lost their rights because of their crimes. For those who will never trust or obey Him, He is perfectly free to direct as He pleases. Look at Pharaoh, the wealthiest and most powerful man on earth at that time. All of that privilege was also from God. He hardened his own heart against God. He was already in rebellion, and that being the case, God made it worse and engineered Pharaoh's actions, as a guilty man, to lead to God's glory. Anyway, that's just my take on things.

Again, I wonder how the people of Israel could doubt God when there was a pillar of cloud/fire right there with them. Miracles do not make people believe. Sometimes they only expose the heart of unbelief.

Note that instead of crying out to the Lord, they go after Moses.

Vs. 15-18 This is an amazing event, and the lesson for us as disciples is to follow the Lord no matter what. God can deliver.

Notice again how God coaches Moses and assures him.

Vs. 19-20 Here the *angel of God*, in the cloud, went between the Egyptians and Israel. Notice too that it was dark on one side and gave light on the other. For an interesting note on the pillar and the *angel of God* (angel of the Lord), look at 1 Corinthians 10:4.

Vs. 21-31 People make a lot of the wind and the role it played as if to explain this by the wind. This was just a flat out miracle. God provided a wide path in the sea for at least 2 million people to cross (600,000 men plus women and children). The wind may have dried the surface, but if it was strong enough to push back the sea, it would have been strong enough to blow the people away.

Pharaoh was totally irrational in following. Not one of the soldiers survived. Egypt was ruined.

Exodus 15:1-18

If the people had had hearts of devotion to God, this would have been very meaningful. In that it was inspired by the Spirit, it shows great things about God. In many respects, this looks a lot like the kind of praise David expressed toward God.

Also, there is another group that will sing this song of Moses. They are found in Revelation 15. Can you see the connection between their situation and the event here and why it would be fitting for them to be singing this song?

V. 13 Notice the mention of God's *steadfast love*. That is much like David.

Vs. 14-16 The effect of this and everything that had happened in Egypt is that the nations feared the Lord. When the people get to Jericho forty years from now, that fear will still be present in Jericho.

Vs. 17-18 Again, in David's praise there is often the mention of God's presence and sanctuary and the Lord reigning forever.

This song is very heartfelt, I'm sure, but the people will soon forget all this and complain. Emotion is never the measure of true devotion and commitment to God. Being a disciple means giving up your life to follow Christ in the harvest. Following Christ has less to do with emotion than raw devotion, love and faith. I love emotion, but seeing this reaction of the people and seeing how much the church loves worship, but is allergic to reaching lost people, I don't put any weight on great bands and worship in church. I think we are conditioned to think that feeling gushy toward Jesus is the goal. Jesus says, "*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?*" And below, there is a parable to this effect.

Matthew 21:23-46

Vs. 23-27 I remember reading this the first time and identifying with the irrational hardness of heart of the Pharisees. They were afraid to give a straight answer, weighing the options.

Vs. 28-32 This parable underscores Jesus' first principle of discipleship: obedience - not emotion, following - not talking. This was very true and you can imagine that the Pharisees were not happy with what Jesus said here.

Vs. 33-41 I've often thought that this entire scenario is irrational on the part of the people running the vineyard. Why would they get the land if they killed the heir? There is no rational reason. In the same way, when suppressing the truth is the goal, there is no rationality. We might see this on the part of unchurched people where it is pitiable and understandable. Where it hits us the hardest, as disciples, is when you see this kind of suppression and irrationality on the part of believers, churches and leaders. I have been in churches where there was no fruit, but rather a rigid, self-righteous guarding of the truth and church tradition. It was as if they knew nothing of the love of Christ and true mission of the bride. If Jesus had shown up, they probably would have opposed Him and thrown Him out.

V. 41 It is interesting to see that the Pharisees were totally engaged in the story and wanted to judge those tenants too.

Vs. 42-46 They realized that Jesus had spoken this against them. They were the tenants and were also fulfilling a part of the Old Testament prophecies. Interestingly, they didn't arrest Jesus because they, again, were weighing the options.

Psalm 26

As disciples, following our Savior in the harvest, can we bow our heads and say these words to Him with this sincerity and meaning?

Vs. 1-5 Isn't it interesting how similar this sounds to Psalm 1?

Vs. 6-8 These verses mention something important to David and to us, praising God and being close to Him. Whether we find it in a room or in a chair in a corner, I think it needs to be the constant yearning of a disciple to be close, confined, connected to Christ, quiet and alone, to enjoy His presence. As important as the harvest is, the strength of our hearts, what gives us the ability to withstand the conflict and pressure of this earth, is quietness with the Lord, with His Word, in prayer in that place where we meet Him.

Vs. 9-12 Again, David is crying out and sees his hope and confidence in the Lord.

Proverbs 6:16-19

So, as a disciple, which of these do you need to avoid? I found a couple.