**CROSSING OF THE RED SEA**

Sunday School Lesson 2

*Wandering in the Wilderness*

Exodus 14

1/12/2024

**Lesson Review:** In our first lesson in this new series, we looked at the reason for the wilderness journey and the request that was made to the Pharaoh for the Israelites to depart from Egypt. First, when it comes to the request, we see that the wilderness was requested because it was a place to sacrifice and feast unto the Lord. When Moses went to the Pharaoh, he told him that they specifically needed to go into the wilderness in order to sacrifice unto the Lord their God. One would think that they could sacrifice to the Lord anywhere. In fact, the Israelites would perform their first sacrifice there in Egypt when they sacrificed an unblemished lamb and placed its blood on their door posts (Passover Feast). It wasn’t that the wilderness was the only place to sacrifice, but it did provide a separated and secluded place for them to sacrifice and feast unto the Lord. Likewise, wilderness moments in life provide us with a great opportunity to commune alone with God and offer up sacrifices of praise unto Him. The second purpose of our lesson was to look at the reason that the Lord led the Israelites through the wilderness instead of through the land of the Philistines. The wilderness provided a much longer journey and a less scenic one as well. Most people would prefer the faster and more aesthetic trip. This is also how we often feel in life. The Lord leads us through wilderness moments that can be slow and unpleasant to look at. We question why He wouldn’t lead us down a seemingly easier path. The reality is that the wilderness was the easier path. The Israelites were not ready to face the Philistines, and the Lord knew that they would turn in fear and fail the fight. Likewise, the Lord brings us through the wilderness to prepare us for things that we are not ready for yet. In today’s lesson, we are going to be looking at the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea. This miracle opened the front door into the wilderness. Let’s see what we can learn from it:

1. **THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA WAS AN INTENTIONAL AND NEEDED EVENT.**
2. **Notice that the Lord intentionally led the Israelites to a place where they had to cross by the sea.** *Numbers 33:6 And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. 7 And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pihahiroth, which is before Baalzephon: and they pitched before Migdol. Exodus 14:1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.* In Numbers 33, the Bible tells us something very interesting about the Israelites’ travel into the wilderness. From a geographical standpoint, it was not required for them to cross the Red Sea when they exited the land of Goshen in Egypt. Before camping before the sea, they were in a place called Etham that is at the edge of the wilderness. The Lord intentionally turned them again unto Pihahiroth and had them camp there before Migdol. This means they took a step back in their journey into the wilderness. We should consider that the Lord allows this to happen intentionally in our lives to accomplish His specific purposes for us.
3. **Notice that the Lord had a very clear motive in leading the Israelites to their dwelling place by the sea.** *Exodus 14:3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so.**5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?*The Lord positioned Israel by the sea to set a trap for the Egyptians. He knew that the Pharaoh was a prideful man. He knew that he would struggle with the defeat of letting the Israelites go. It was only a matter of time before the Egyptians came looking for the Israelites to force them back to Egypt as slaves. Consequently, they had to be dealt with. For the Israelites to move forward, they could not have this conflict hanging over them. The Lord kindly forced closure that was absolutely needed for Israel. We should recognize the graciousness of God when He does this for us.
4. **THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA WAS MEANT TO BREAK ISRAEL’S MISPLACED TRUST.**
5. **Notice that while Israel hated their service in Egypt, they held on to an improper trust for the Egyptians and their life there with them.** *Exodus 14:12 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. Jeremiah 43:7 So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord: thus came they even to Tahpanhes.* The Israelites had a very strange relationship with Egypt. While they hated being there in slavery, they held on to some reliance on Egypt. They were slow to trust Moses and Aaron to leave Egypt to begin with. Later on in Israel’s history, we see that Egypt becomes a type of crutch for them. To avoid Babylonian captivity, the Israelites went to Egypt for protection. Egypt was a powerful nation, and it’s not hard to see why they felt the way they did about them. They were afraid of them, and in their minds, it was better to serve them than to be killed by them. God caused them to face the Egyptians to help break them from this reliance. He desired for them to rely upon Him, and He positioned them to ensure that they would. Too often, we trust in the wrong things, and God has to lead us to a place to break us from the improper faith.
6. **Notice that Israel had very little trust in the Lord when He led them to their dwelling place by the sea.** *Exodus 14:10 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. 11 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? 13a And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,* The Israelites had just seen the mighty hand of God when He led them out of Egypt. Can you imagine seeing the plagues that the Lord caused to come upon the land of Egypt? Any doubts they had in God’s ability should have been long gone by that point. Like the disciples in the New Testament, they were slow to trust God like they should, even in the face of miracles. The Red Sea encounter wasn’t initiated just to break their trust in Egypt. It was also meant to cause their trust to be placed in the Lord God Almighty. That faith would be essential to their ability to endure the wilderness. Likewise, we struggle to trust God as we ought to. He brings us through the door of the wilderness to help us.
7. **THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA WAS A WAY FOR THE LORD TO CONFIRM A LEADER.**
8. **Notice that Israel and Moses both had very little confidence in Moses’ ability to lead them where God wanted them to go.** *Exodus 3:1 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? 6:9 And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage. 14:12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?* It was not just the Lord that the Israelites didn’t trust. They did not trust the man that He sent to lead them. They had a low view of Moses. They did not believe him at first when he came to them in Egypt. They accused him there before the Red Sea of leading them out there to die. Sadly, Moses himself had little confidence in his ability to lead. The events of the Red Sea crossing provided a great time to address this for both Israel and Moses. Often, in wilderness trips, the Lord puts people in place to help lead us through the rough times. These people play an important role.
9. **Notice that the Red Sea crossing gave Moses the opportunity and the confidence to lead Israel.** *Exodus 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. 15 And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:* When you see Moses’ response to the Israelites at the Red Sea, it’s hard to see this as the same man who struggled to accept his role of leadership when God spoke through the burning bush. He spoke to Israel with great confidence. This was his moment that God provided him to step up and lead. When he went to the Lord for advice on what to do, the Lord asked him why he was crying unto Him. He told Moses to tell the people to go forward as planned. The wilderness is a great place for leaders to get the confidence they need to lead properly. The Lord wants to grow and teach us.
10. **Notice that Israel recognized Moses as the servant of the Lord.** *Exodus 14:30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. 31 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.* They eyes of the people of Israel were opened after the Red Sea crossing. Imagine their response when Moses raised up his rod, and the Red Sea parted in two. Then, they witnessed the destruction of the Pharaoh and his army after Israel had crossed on dry ground. They had seen enough. They believed in Moses as a servant of God. While this would not last for long, it did at least provide some peace in the camp of Israel in following after Moses. Leadership is often identifiable in the wilderness. Some step up.