

Through the Red Sea

Sabbath Afternoon, August 2

The Hebrews were encamped beside the sea, whose waters presented a seemingly impassable barrier before them, while on the south a rugged mountain obstructed their further progress. Suddenly they beheld in the distance the flashing armor and moving chariots betokening the advance guard of a great army. As the force drew nearer, the hosts of Egypt were seen in full pursuit. Terror filled the hearts of Israel. Some cried unto the Lord, but far the greater part hastened to Moses with their complaints: "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."

Moses was greatly troubled that his people should manifest so little faith in God, notwithstanding they had repeatedly witnessed the manifestation of His power in their behalf. How could they charge upon him the dangers and difficulties of their situation, when he had followed the express command of God? True, there was no possibility of deliverance unless God Himself should interpose for their release; but having been brought into this position in obedience to the divine direction, Moses felt no fear of the consequences. His calm and assuring reply to the people was, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

It was not an easy thing to hold the hosts of Israel in waiting before the Lord. Lacking discipline and self-control, they became violent and unreasonable. They expected speedily to fall into the hands of their oppressors, and their wailings and lamentations were loud and deep. The wonderful pillar of cloud had been followed as the signal of God to go forward; but now they questioned among themselves if it might not foreshadow some great calamity; for had it not led them on the wrong side of the mountain, into an impassable way? Thus the angel of God appeared to their deluded minds as the harbinger of disaster.

But now, as the Egyptian host approached them, expecting to make them an easy prey, the cloudy column rose majestically into the heavens, passed over the Israelites, and descended between them and the armies of Egypt. A wall of darkness interposed between the pursued and their pursuers. The Egyptians could no longer discern the camp of the Hebrews, and were forced to halt. But as the darkness of night deepened, the wall of cloud became a great light to the Hebrews, flooding the entire encampment with the radiance of day. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 283, 284.

Sunday, August 3

Go, and Worship the Lord

In one of the most beautiful and comforting passages of Isaiah's prophecy, reference is made to the pillar of cloud and of fire to represent God's care for His people in the great final struggle with the powers of evil: "The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for above all the glory shall be a covering. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." Isaiah 4:5, 6, margin.

Across a dreary, desertlike expanse they journeyed. Already they began to wonder whither their course would lead; they were becoming weary with the toilsome way, and in some hearts began to arise a fear of pursuit by the Egyptians. But the cloud went forward, and they followed. And now the Lord directed Moses to turn aside into a rocky defile, and encamp beside the sea. It was revealed to him that Pharaoh would pursue them, but that God would be honored in their deliverance.

In Egypt the report was spread that the children of Israel, instead of tarrying to worship in the desert, were pressing on toward the Red Sea. Pharaoh's counselors declared to the king that their bondmen had fled, never to return. The people deplored their folly in attributing the death of the first-born to the power of God. Their great men, recovering from their fears, accounted for the plagues as the result of natural causes. "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" was the bitter cry. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 283.

When light from God, strong and convincing, came to make known the great I AM, Pharaoh was compelled to yield. But as soon as the pressure was removed, his unbelief returned and counteracted the great light God had given. When he refused the evidence of the first miracle, he sowed the seed of infidelity, which, left to its natural course, produced a harvest after its own kind. Afterward the king would not be convinced by any working of God's power. The monarch hardened his heart, and went on from one step to another of unbelief, until throughout the vast realm of Egypt the firstborn, the pride of every household, had been laid low. After this he hurried with his army after Israel. He sought to bring back a people delivered by the arm of Omnipotence. But he was fighting against a Power greater than any human power, and with his host he perished in the waters of the Red Sea. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 103.

Consecration of the Firstborn

In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the dedication of the first-born was again commanded. While the children of Israel were in bondage to the Egyptians, the Lord directed Moses to go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, even My first-born: and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." Exodus 4:22, 23.

Moses delivered his message; but the proud king's answer was, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Exodus 5:2. The Lord worked for His people by signs and wonders, sending terrible judgments upon Pharaoh. At length the destroying angel was bidden to slay the first-born of man and beast among the Egyptians. That the Israelites might be spared, they were directed to place upon their doorposts the blood of a slain lamb. Every house was to be marked, that when the angel came on his mission of death, he might pass over the homes of the Israelites.

After sending this judgment upon Egypt, the Lord said to Moses, "Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, . . . both of man and of beast: it is Mine;" "for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto Me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast: Mine shall they be: I am the Lord." Exodus 13:2; Numbers 3:13. After the tabernacle service was established, the Lord chose the tribe of Levi in the place of the first-born of all Israel to minister in the sanctuary. But the first-born were still to be regarded as the Lord's, and were to be bought back by a ransom.

Thus the law for the presentation of the first-born was made particularly significant. While it was a memorial of the Lord's wonderful deliverance of the children of Israel, it prefigured a greater deliverance, to be wrought out by the only-begotten Son of God. As the blood sprinkled on the doorposts had saved the first-born of Israel, so the blood of Christ has power to save the world. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 51.

The dedication of the firstborn had its origin in the earliest times. God had promised to give the Firstborn of heaven to save the sinner. This gift was to be acknowledged in every household by the consecration of the firstborn son. He was to be devoted to the priesthood, as a representative of Christ among human beings.

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Tuesday, August 5

Crossing the Red Sea

The psalmist, describing the passage of the sea by Israel, sang, “Thy way was in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps were not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” Psalm 77:19, 20, R.V. As Moses stretched out his rod the waters parted, and Israel went into the midst of the sea, upon dry ground, while the waters stood like a wall upon each side. The light from God’s pillar of fire shone upon the foam-capped billows, and lighted the road that was cut like a mighty furrow through the waters of the sea, and was lost in the obscurity of the farther shore.

“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.” The mysterious cloud changed to a pillar of fire before their astonished eyes. The thunders pealed and the lightnings flashed. “The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound: Thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of Thy thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightning lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.” Psalm 77:17, 18, R.V.

The Egyptians were seized with confusion and dismay. Amid the wrath of the elements, in which they heard the voice of an angry God, they endeavored to retrace their steps and flee to the shore they had quitted. But Moses stretched out his rod, and the piled-up waters, hissing, roaring, and eager for their prey, rushed together and swallowed the Egyptian army in their black depths. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 287.

God brought his chosen people out of Egypt with mighty signs and wonders. He laid the land desolate by plagues, and slew the firstborn of the Egyptians in order to bring deliverance to his people. He opened to them a path through the Red Sea, and in the pillar of cloud and fire he stood as a wall of protection between his people and Pharaoh, who with his armies, chariots, and horsemen came in pursuit of Israel. At the word of command the Red Sea rolled upon the hosts of the Egyptians, while Israel sang songs of triumph and praise. —“The Time of Thy Visitation,” *Signs of the Times*, February 27, 1896, par. 2.

Marching Forward by Faith

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. Exodus 14:21, 22.

“Go forward” was the word given by Moses, and it was echoed by the captains of the different divisions. In obedience the host of Israel stepped into the path so strangely and so wonderfully prepared for them. The light from God’s pillar of fire shone upon the foam-capped billows and lighted the road that was cut like a mighty furrow through the waters of the sea.

As the cloud moved slowly on, the Egyptian sentinels discovered that the Israelites had moved their encampment, and at once the mighty army was set in readiness for motion. They heard the sound of the marching of the Hebrews, but they could see nothing, for the cloud that gave light to Israel was to the Egyptians a wall of darkness. Guided by the sound, they followed on into the miraculous path God had prepared for His people. All night they followed, but they moved slowly, for their chariots drove heavily. Yet still they moved on, expecting soon to break through the cloud and overtake the fugitives.

At last the shadows of the night passed away, the morning dawned, and the pursuing army was almost within reach of the fleeing Hebrews. . . . Before their astonished eyes the mysterious cloud changed to a pillar of fire reaching from earth to heaven. The thunders pealed and the lightnings flashed. “The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.”

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As morning broke, it revealed to the multitudes of Israel all that remained of their mighty foe—the mail-clad bodies cast upon the shore. From the most terrible peril one night had brought deliverance. . . . Jehovah alone had brought them deliverance, and to Him their hearts were turned in gratitude and faith. Their emotions found utterance in songs of praise. —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 105.

The Song of Moses and Miriam

As morning broke it revealed to the multitudes of Israel all that remained of their mighty foes—the mail-clad bodies cast upon the shore. From the most terrible peril, one night had brought complete deliverance. That vast, helpless throng—bondmen unused to battle, women, children, and cattle, with the sea before them, and the mighty armies of Egypt pressing behind—had seen their path opened through the waters and their enemies overwhelmed in the moment of expected triumph. Jehovah alone had brought them deliverance, and to Him their hearts were turned in gratitude and faith. Their emotion found utterance in songs of praise. The Spirit of God rested upon Moses, and he led the people in a triumphant anthem of thanksgiving, the earliest and one of the most sublime that are known to man.

“I will sing unto Jehovah, for He hath triumphed gloriously;

The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 287, 288.

The Spirit of God rested upon Moses, and he led the people in a triumphant anthem of thanksgiving, the earliest and one of the most sublime that are known to man. . . .

That song does not belong to the Jewish people alone. It points forward to the destruction of all the foes of righteousness and the final victory of the Israel of God. The prophet of Patmos beholds the white-robed multitude that have “gotten the victory,” standing on the “sea of glass mingled with fire,” having “the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Revelation 15:2, 3). . . .

In freeing our souls from the bondage of sin, God has wrought for us a deliverance greater than that of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Like the Hebrew host, we should praise the Lord with heart and soul and voice for His “wonderful works to the children of men.” Those who dwell upon God’s great mercies, and are not unmindful of His lesser gifts, will put on the girdle of gladness and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. The daily blessings that we receive from the hand of God, and above all else the death of Jesus to bring happiness and heaven within our reach, should be a theme for constant gratitude. —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 93.

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 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. Miriam, the sister of Moses, a prophetess, led the women in music. —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 235, 236.

Friday, August 8

For Further Reading

"Go Forward," in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 20–27.

"In the End God's Enemies Will Perish," *Christ Triumphant*, April 9, p. 106.