

## **International Sunday School Lesson Study Notes**

**Lesson Text: Exodus 14:21-30**

**Lesson Title: Beginning of Freedom**

### **Introduction**

The Israelites must have experienced a wide range of emotions as they made their exodus from Egypt. One the night of the Passover, the Israelites gathered their families and their treasures and quickly left the land of bondage, moving from Rameses to Succoth (Exodus 12:37) and then on to Etham on the edge of the Wilderness (Exodus 13:20). Moses led them as he carefully followed the Lord's instructions. The Lord led Moses and the children of Israel, using a miraculous "*pillar of cloud by day*" and "*the pillar of fire by night*" (Exodus 13:22). At the beginning of their new freedom, everything seemed to be going well. Then things suddenly changed!

History is filled with stories of people fleeing from oppression only to be pursued by their former masters. Some gained their freedom and others were taken back into a life of misery and slavery. Sometimes the beginning of freedom can be a fearful and terrifying thing. Perhaps no story in history has become as widely known as that of the Israelites leaving the land of Egypt and then being chased by Pharaoh and his army and trapped at the shore of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:23). In spite of all God had done for them and His promises to them they must have wondered if this was the end.

Sometimes God puts His people into difficult and even threatening situations in order that He might increase our faith and destroy our enemies. Regardless of the circumstances, God will always protect His people. Believers must learn to trust Him and be patient as God works His sovereign will in us and in the world. Remember, not one Israelite whom God was about to take across the Red Sea knew anything about life outside of Egypt. Every one of these Israelites had been born and raised in Egypt. God was about to teach them a new lifestyle.

### **The Dividing of the Waters (Exodus 14:21-22)**

The opening verses of Exodus 14 might lead you to believe that God had delivered Israel into an impossible situation. With mountains on each side of them, the Red Sea in front of them, and the pursing armies of Pharaoh behind them, things didn't look good (Exodus 14:10). The joy of being free from Egypt had quickly turned

into fear and dismay as the Israelites heard the rumble of hundreds of chariots and hoof beats of horses coming closer. They had believed the Lord had set them free. Now they wondered why He allowed the Egyptians to pursue them.

The situation looks bad but remember how Exodus 14 begins, *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying"* (Exodus 14:1). It really doesn't matter what Pharaoh is doing as long as God's man is hearing from God! As a result of God speaking to Moses, he commanded the children of Israel *"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"* (Exodus 14:13). They were not to worry or be afraid and they were to watch what God would do on their behalf.

### Verse 21

"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."

Several things take place as the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea occurs. First, it is still amazing and humbling that God used "Moses" to work this miracle. Certainly God could have parted the Red Sea without Moses, *"his hand"* or his *"rod"* (Exodus 12:16). God chooses to use man in the carrying out of His will. Second, the "sea" did not immediately part. The "strong east wind" blew "all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." If the waters had parted suddenly, the Israelites would have walked into a swamp of mud and died. It takes time for a river bed to dry. But the "strong east wind" that blew all that night was drying up the road for the Israelites to cross over the Red Sea.

### Verse 22

"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."

As the Red Sea "waters were divided" (Exodus 14:21), its waves formed a great, massive, vertical "wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." Imagine how the fearful people, no doubt restless all night, reacted when they woke up the next morning and saw that there was a dry walkway with two towering walls of water instead of being blocked by the Red Sea. As soon as God removed the "strong east wind" the "children of Israel went into the midst of the sea."

*Think about it: Maybe you're trying to sleep tonight with a Red Sea in front of you. When you wake up in the morning you may find out God has made a way!*

## **The Drowning of the Egyptians (Exodus 14:23-31)**

### Verse 23

"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."

Of course the Egyptians concluded that if the Israelites could cross the Red Sea, so could they. If slaves could make across surely Egyptians could! They fell right into God's trap! The Egyptians were like Naaman the leper who *"thought"* the prophet Elisha would come to him and heal him. Instead, Elisha commanded Naaman to *"wash in the Jordan seven times"* (2 Kings 5:1-14). The world believes they have outsmarted God. Many educators, legislators, entertainers, and even religious leaders think they have pulled one over the Lord. They boast of the laws they have succeeded in passing that deny God and His Holy Word. They take pride in their social agendas that appear on the surface to be tolerant and loving. And all the while they are saying "Giddy 'up horse," and heading straight for the judgment of God (Psalm 2:2-5).

### Verse 24-25

"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."

When the sun rose it became evident that the Lord had "troubled the host of the Egyptians." "Troubled" means "confused." God brought confusion to the Egyptians. "Their chariot wheels" came off because "they drave them heavily." Everything became difficult for the Egyptians. Some suggest the chariot wheels were covered with mud and broke apart or bogged down the Egyptians. Skeptics ask if God dried up the sea bed how would there be mud to bog down the Egyptians chariots? If God dried up the sea bed He certainly could "muddy it up" again. And that is a possibility once the children of Israel have crossed over and the "strong east wind" no longer blew.

Whatever happened in that sea bed to bog down Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen resulted in fear of death and recognition that "...the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians." Moses had promised, "*The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace*" (Exodus 14:14). The Egyptians were convinced that it was "the LORD," Jehovah, leading His people and preventing their advance. Furthermore, remember what the Lord had said? "*And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD...*" (Exodus 7:5, 17; 8:22; 14:4, 18). Well, now they know!

#### Verse 26-28

"And 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."

God instructed Moses to release the sea wall from its duty of restraining the waters and that is exactly what Moses did. When Moses "stretched forth his hand over the sea," the "sea returned to his strength." When that occurred, "...the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." The Egyptians were caught in the middle of the angry waters as the forces of gravity required they return to their original place. No one survived, "there remained not so much as one of them."

#### Verse 29

"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."

What a contrast in the words, "there remained not so much as one of them" (Exodus 14:28) and the words, "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea..." (Exodus 14:29). Just as the Israelites cleared the riverbed the Egyptians filled it. What was a passage way for God's people became a watery tomb for the Egyptians. Not a single Israelite died and not a single Egyptian lived! What a contrast!

#### Verse 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."

God's promises to Moses and His people had come true. God had fought Israel's battle and won a great victory for His people. It can be summoned up in the words, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians..." They did not fight their way out or figure their way out of this situation. The "LORD saved Israel that day" and all glory, honor and praise belongs unto him.

"Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore" might be one aspect of this story you think could have been left out. However, there is spiritual significance in the fact that Israel "saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." Without reading into the text something that is not there or becoming too allegorical, it was important that the Israelites see the evidence that what pursued them was no longer a threat. So it is with the sins of our past. Because of God's saving grace and His mighty hand of deliverance we who are saved by God's grace are no longer pursued by our old sinful life (Romans 6:11). The power of cancelled sin will never again hold us in bondage. Like the Israelites of old, we are free!

## **Conclusion**

Isn't it amazing what God can do without our help? The Israelites did nothing but follow God's man and watch the Lord do the work. No weapons, no fighting, just following orders. This is the first step in their new life. Things will change in the future. They will have weapons and they will be required to fight and do battle in the future, but not today, not this time. Today, they are here to watch and learn to trust.

Exodus 14:31 says, *"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."* The "great work" was that God had kept His promises, changed certain defeat into victory, and opened the way for physical and spiritual freedom for His people.

If you are standing at a personal Red Sea today with the enemy behind you and walls around you, know that the Lord can open up a way for you. Place your trust in Jesus Christ no matter how dark your circumstances may be. The Lord can work a miracle for you!

Amen.