The Escape From Egypt

Exodus 12:31 - 14:31

Bible Memory Verse

Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV

Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Bible Story

Apparently the final plague was too much for the hard-hearted Pharaoh. He just could not contend and be stubborn against the God of the Israelites. So during the night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and told him that all the Israelites could leave (with no more conditions). “Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me” (Exodus 12:31-32). Pharaoh released his grip on the people of Israel and let them leave.

All the Egyptians urged the people to leave as well. Just think, plagues had ravaged their country, their land, their livestock, and their very children, they were left with next to nothing. They wanted the Israelites out of their land to spare them further misery and heartache. As the Israelites left, they plundered the Egyptians. They actually asked for things and the Egyptians gave it to them (Exodus 12:36).

And so the people began the journey, the mass exodus from the land of Egypt. Men, women and children, livestock, food, and the articles of gold and silver they took from the Egyptians, all began the journey to the Promised Land. Freedom. They were no longer slaves of an angry and oppressive ruler. The Lord had delivered them from their enemies. And now 600,000 men strong, they ventured into the unknown, led by a former Egyptian, into a land they did not know, and following a God they did not yet trust. They had been in the land of Egypt for 430 years to the very day (Exodus 12:40-41).

The Lord God went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. “Neither the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the

people" (Exodus 13:22). The Israelites were led toward the Red Sea. It seems that the Lord strategically positioned the Israelites to make the Egyptians think that they were trapped and that they had a chance to pursue them and destroy them. By this, the Lord said, "He would gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (Exodus 14:4).

So, true to form, the king of Egypt hardened his heart toward the Israelites after they had left and he gathered his army to pursue and destroy them. When the Israelites saw the Egyptians coming toward them, they panicked and were deathly afraid.

> *"Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'leave us alone' let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Exodus 14:11-12).*

They really trusted the Lord to deliver them didn't they?! Not really. This would become a regular occurrence with the children of Israel, complaining and grumbling at every turn and at every obstacle.

Meanwhile, Moses encouraged the people not to be afraid. He instructed them to stand firm. "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:14). This was Moses idea, but not the Lord's. The next verse is the Lord correcting Moses' stand still policy and commands him to stretch out his hand with the staff in it and divide the waters of the sea so the Israelites can go on through on dry ground. Moses did so, while the angel of the Lord who had been traveling in front of the Israelites went behind them to come between them and the Egyptian army (probably to buy time). That night the sea was driven back by a strong east wind that divided the waters and allowed the Israelites to pass through to the other side on dry ground. The Egyptian army then pursued them through the wall of water that was divided. The Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud and threw the army into confusion. The wheels came off of their chariots and they couldn't drive them, became afraid and tried to run. Then at the Lord's command, Moses stretched out his hand and caused the sea to go back to its place. As the Egyptians were fleeing from the Israelites, "the Lord swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived" (Exodus 14:27-28).

That was the day the Israelites were saved from the hand of Pharaoh and were delivered by the hand of the Lord their God.

> *"And when the Israelites saw the great power of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (Exodus 14:31).*

And so they sang a song of celebration that they were free—Israelite Independence Day!!

FYI — It is interesting to note the amount of Israelites that left Egypt: about 600,000 men, besides women and children. Rough estimates of the actual population range from 1.2 million to 3 million people. This is probably fairly accurate considering the rapid growth of the Israelites during their oppression mentioned in Exodus 1. Just how many total there were, though, is not known. Even a very large population is not supported by archaeological evidence, yet. But we do know there were 600,000 men.

The "angel of the Lord" appears in this section with power and purpose. This angel is the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Almost all scholars attribute the pre-incarnate Christ/Messiah to the identity of the "angel of the Lord." It is almost unanimous that this is a code word for Jesus. He does some awesome things in this passage of Scripture.

Life Application

The significance of this event is difficult to portray into our everyday language and experience. This "exodus" from Egypt is the nation of Israel's independence day. Just like America's declaration of independence from Britain on July 4, 1776, so was this day, the Passover, the day the Israelites were set free from tyranny and oppression in Egypt.

Another note of application comes in the form of how we are to trust the Lord. When the people were brought out into the desert and they were encamped along the Red Sea and they saw the Egyptian army in an all out pursuit of them, they panicked and began to fear the outcome. They did not trust the Lord to deliver them. We act the same way, don't we?

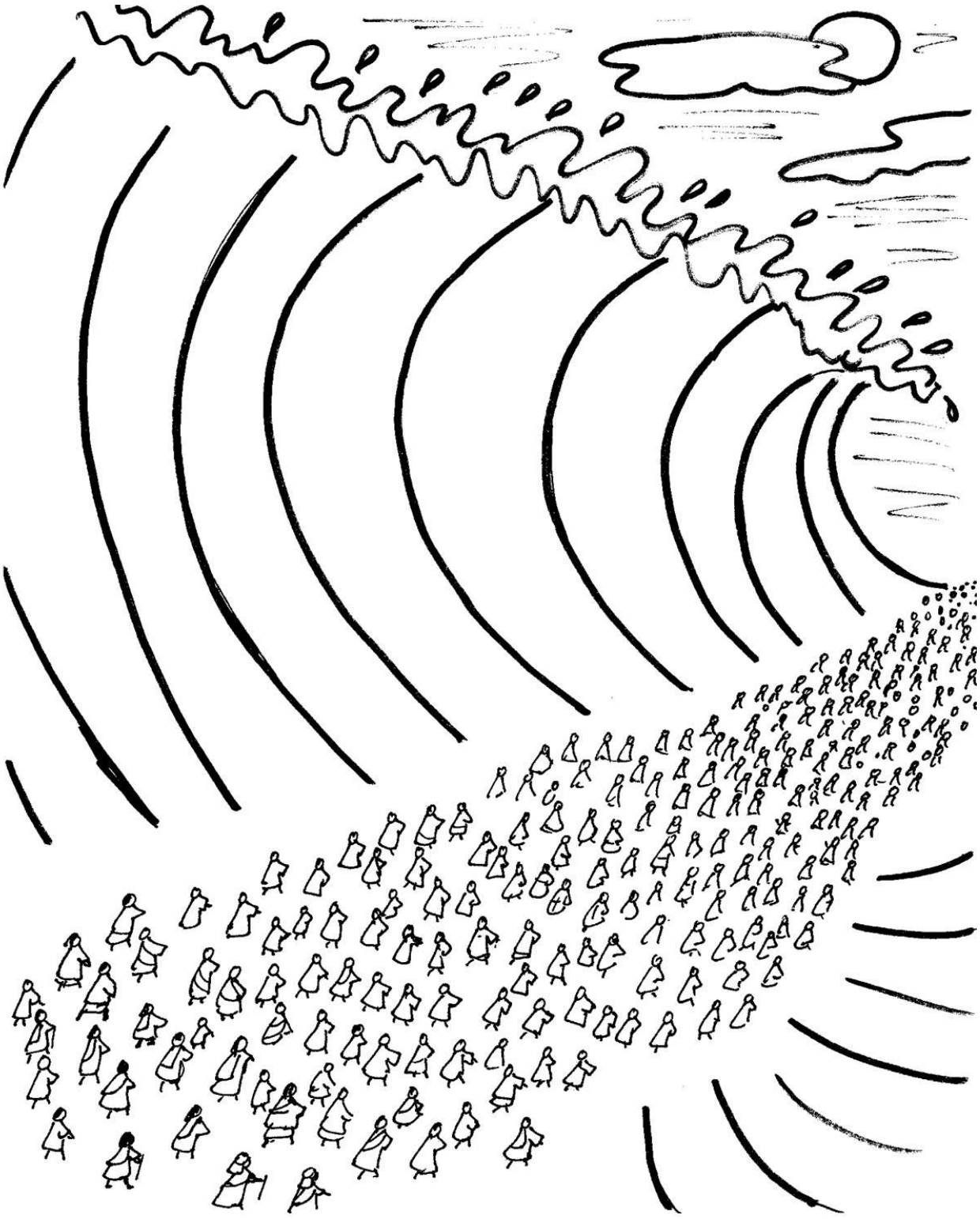
I wonder, when it comes down to it, do we really believe that the Lord will come through for us? Or do we try to take care of things on our own? We lie, cheat, steal, and complain, to get our way instead of God's way. Maybe we should exercise more faith that the Lord will come through for us. We should trust him with everything, not just a few things.

Review Questions

1. Who finally let the Israelites go? Pharaoh
2. What did the Egyptians give to the Israelites? Gold and Silver
3. What was the Israelites “leaving” of Egypt called? The Exodus
4. Where were the Israelites headed? The Promised Land. The land of Canaan.
5. How many Israelite men were there? 600,000 men
6. How long does the Bible say the Israelites lived in Egypt? 430 years
7. Who led them out of Egypt and into the desert? The LORD God ... or Moses
8. What led them by day and what led them by night? Pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night
9. What did Pharaoh decide to do after the Israelites had left? Chase after them and destroy them.
10. How did the Israelites react to the Egyptians coming after them? They totally freaked out and were deathly afraid and blamed Moses!
11. What did God tell Moses to do to make the water rise into walls? Raise up his staff
12. How did the LORD God protect the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians? The pillar of fire went in between the Egyptians and the Israelites
13. What happened to the Egyptian army? They pursued the Israelites into the Red Sea, but the wall of water caved in on them and they were destroyed

Coloring Sheet

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