**Session 15: Week 8b**

**Start at 18:30**

***God of Deliverance***

**Exodus 14:5 – 15:21**

**21-22 November 2022**

**God’s Leading** – When Moses resumes the story of the exodus from Egypt after explaining about Passover and redeeming the firstborn, he tells us that God did not choose to lead Israel straight to Canaan. Instead He leads them in a circuitous route that puts them in a position of being as vulnerable militarily as they could possibly be. Moses reveals that God’s reason for not leading the Israelites straight to Canaan was that they would have to go through—or at least very close to—Philistine, and the Philistines were known for their weaponry. The Hebrews did possess some weapons, but they had not yet been trained in the art of war, and God didn’t want them to face a war when they weren’t ready for it.

**Joseph’s Bones** – We are also told that Moses was faithful to carry out Joseph’s last request, that when his family’s descendants someday left Egypt to return to Canaan that they would carry his bones with them so that he could ultimately be buried in his ancestor’s tomb.

**Pillar of Cloud, Pillar of Fire** – This pillar is the manifestation of God Himself. The Israelites had heard of a similar manifestation from the days of Abraham when God first established His covenant with him by moving between the cut up animal sacrifices as a *smoking firepot* and a *burning torch*. This cloud/fire pillar manifestation will remain with them throughout their wilderness wanderings and will be memorialized in the form of two gigantic columns when they construct the temple years later.

**Camping by the Sea** – God once again leads His people to a place that seems disastrous militarily. He tells them to camp by the Red Sea, which makes them seemingly utterly vulnerable when Pharoah’s army marches out to recapture them. But God is drawing Pharoah out to destruction and judgment. And He is continuing the birth narrative of Exodus: Israel is a newborn baby now, just delivered. Now the cord must be cut; that is, their former ties with Egypt must be completely severed. And like all newborns, they show that they are alive by making a loud cry. In this case, it is a cry of terror as they imagine that they will all be killed.

**Moses’ Response** – Moses tells the people that they are to stand still and see what God will do on their behalf. He says that they will never again see these Egyptians who are coming against them. On the one hand, Moses’ words are a reassuring *promise* to a terrified people: that which they fear will never follow them. But his words are also a *warning:* if you were tempted to go back, it’s all behind you, and it’s gone. The cord is cut!

**A Defenseless Nation** – Moses’ words not only deal with the issue of fear but also the fact that the Israelites are as defenseless as a newborn baby at this point. They are totally untrained in the art of war and therefore unable to fight for themselves. So in this case God will do all the fighting on their behalf. Later on, however, when they are ready, He will send them into war. Similarly there may be times when we are utterly defenseless in some situation and so must wait silently for God to come to our aid. But we are also told to “put on the armor of God” so that we can do spiritual battle against the Devil and the flesh. This is an instance in which we may be tempted to take a verse (Exodus 14:14) out of context and apply it in ways God did not intend. Sometimes we are to “stand still” as God fights *for* us, but at other times we are to battle diligently as God fights *alongside* us.

**Separation Revisited** – The pillar of fire moved from the front of the people and stood behind them, between them and the Egyptian army. This separation of light from darkness is reminiscent of what occurred in the Genesis creation account. Then God separated the waters of the Red Sea from the dry ground, just as He had separated the waters from the dry ground in Genesis 1. And this was accomplished by means of a strong east wind, a “ruach,” the Hebrew word for wind or spirit. Once again the Holy Spirit is hovering nearby to watch over God’s creation.

**The Song of Moses** – The cord has been cut. Israel is a nation. They stand on the sand of the shore of the Red Sea, and they break into song. Notice in particular what verse 11 says: “Who is like You, O Lord (Yahweh), among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” And the answer, of course, is, “No one! Not the fly god, not the frog god, not the sun god or Pharoah himself!” The Israelites are saying that not only has God parted the Red Sea so they could pass through, but they are going to pass right through Canaan, too. The ones of Moses’ day who heard this account might have thought, “But all that happened 40 years ago. What about now?” Remember what Rahab said to the spies who came to Jericho? “We heard what your God did when He brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and our hearts melted within us.”

**Disobedience Is Costly** – Just think about what might have happened if the Israelites had obeyed and marched straight to Canaan when they came out of Egypt. But they didn’t, and it would cost them 40 years and many deaths. Disobedience is *always* costly. It doesn’t just affect the one who disobeys; there is collateral damage that happens. A generation will not just die in the desert: a generation will die in Canaan because they did not get there to proclaim their God.

**Passing Through the Waters** – Think of the significance of what has happened. Noah passed through the waters of sin and death and came out safely on the other side. Moses was placed into the river of death in Egypt, but was brought safely out again. The Israelites themselves had passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. And when Joshua is ready to lead them into the Promised Land, the children of God will pass through the Jordan River on dry ground and come out safely on the other side! **God delivers His people through the waters of judgment.** When Jesus came, the true and better Moses, He stepped into the waters of the Jordan in faithful obedience to identify with His people in baptism. When He came up, the Spirit was hovering. Jesus’ baptism pictures what will soon take place in his death and resurrection.

**The Birth Narrative Continues** – There is yet another birth narrative at the crucifixion: Jesus’ side is pierced, and water and blood pour out as the Church is being born. Remember the account of Nicodemus who came to talk with Jesus secretly, at night? Jesus told him that he needed to be *born again*, for “unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” So we shouldn’t be surprised to find a birth narrative in the book of Exodus. It is a story that repeats in every era…and *it repeats for each one of us who has experienced the second birth.* We were once slaves to unrighteousness. We were delivered out of darkness into the light, and the cord was cut between us and what had been. The Lord stood ready to meet our needs and to grow us into mature Christ-followers.