

CORE STUDY #7

THE RED SEA BAPTISM

Passage: Exodus 14

Themes: overcoming adversity and fear, God's power, provision, baptism, salvation

Background and Summary: Following Israel's exodus from Egypt, Pharaoh becomes angry and decides to pursue the Israelites. Israel becomes trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army, yet God steps in and provides a means of escape. God saves the Israelites from certain death. Israel's passing through the Red Sea is one of the most exciting events recorded in the Old Testament. It is an event of great importance to the nation, ridding the Israelites, once for all, of Pharaoh's dominion.

Leader's Preparation: Using your 'UCM Leader's Guide' (pp. 22-23 or pp. 27-33), ask some observation questions.

- Ask the who, why, what, where questions if appropriate.
- What type of literature is it?
- What is going on in these verses?
- Key words or phrases: Are there any words, history or cultural issues that you don't understand but may be important to the overall understanding of the passage?

Introductory Question: God is miracle-working God. Have you ever recognized a miracle in your life or in someone else's life? Talk about what that was like.

Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

1. What does God instruct Moses and the Israelites to do in verses 1-4? Why do you think God purposefully leads them into this situation?

God leads the Israelites to the very place where they would be cornered by Egypt so that God's name may be exalted above all so-called 'gods'. Each trial we face is an opportunity for God to display His character and glory through us.

2. How do the Israelites react when they discover that Egypt is pursuing them (vs. 9-12)? Do you think their reaction is justified? Why or why not?

Rather than having faith that God would defend them, the Israelites complain to Moses that he has led them out to simply die. Israel has witnessed the mighty plagues and judgements which God brought against the Egyptians. They have witnessed God provide possessions from the Egyptians for their journey. They have visibly followed God's presence in the cloud of pillar and fire. Yet, they choose to fear the Egyptians rather than trust God.

3. What does Moses command the people to do in response to their situation (vs. 13-14)? What do learn here about how we are to respond to our own trials?

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Moses tells them to not be afraid, to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. Even though their first reaction is to run and fight for themselves, he tells them to be still. The Lord will indeed save us out of many trials, but there must be a looking to Him in faith first. That is where peace and a still heart comes from.

4. In what ways does God provide for the Israelites in this moment of danger before the Egyptians (v.19)?

- *God divides the sea providing a safe path of travel.*
- *The pillar of fire (Angel of the Lord) and pillar of cloud go behind them to keep the Egyptians away and to provide light at night for the journey.*

5. Why do you think the Egyptians choose to pursue the Israelites into the sea (v. 23)? Doesn't this seem foolish?

- *The Egyptians stubbornness and greed, combined with God's supernatural hardening of Pharaoh's heart leads them to foolishly pursue the Israelites.*
- *It is possible that the Egyptians have no choice but to pursue because they know that if they disobey Pharaoh's orders, they face certain death back in Egypt.*
- *It is also possible that the Egyptians are not aware that they have entered the sea.*
 - *We are told that they enter the sea, but it is not specifically reported that they knew this was the case.*
 - *The time of the passing through the sea (for both the Israelites and the Egyptians) is late at night (vs 20, 24,27).*
 - *The pillar which gave light to the Israelites, produce or promote darkness for the Egyptians (v. 20). The Israelites can see the sea in the light provided by the pillar, but can the Egyptians?*

6. Israel's crossing of the Red Sea a like a type of baptism. How is Christian baptism similar to the Israelites Red Sea baptism?

The Israelites go down into the sea (which symbolizes death) and come up on the other side into new life. They give up control and go forward into the sea in faith that God will save them. Christian baptism symbolizes our death with Jesus, who went down into death (the grave) yet was resurrected to new life. Through our baptism into Christ, the old self is gone and the new has come. If you are a believer in Christ then you been delivered from death and stand on the other side of the Red Sea.

Response Question: God provided a great victory for His people. What are some areas or circumstances in your own life that you lack faith that God will deliver you from? Pray for increased faith to follow the Lord with confidence. Thank the Lord for the ways he has miraculously delivered you-either physically or spiritually in the past.