

Read Through the Bible

Week 4, January 25th – 30th

Readings: Exodus 7 – 24; Matthew 17 – 20

Reflections and Questions for Thought

By Char Diehl

Exodus 13:17-14:30

The Israelites have left Egypt now and are on their journey back to Israel. God did not lead them by way of the nearest route, but instead He led them into the wilderness. God knew the longer route would protect, train and test His chosen people. In Exodus 14:4 God tells Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart and the Egyptians will pursue them. Though by now they have seen many miracles displaying God's power, the Israelites still become fearful when they see Pharaoh and the Egyptians marching after them. And, because their faith is still weak, they begin complaining to Moses. This was their typical behavior whenever they met with a crisis.

Observation

Exodus 14:14 says, *The Lord will fight for you; . . .* (NIV)

Here Moses is telling the Israelites that they need not be afraid--they only need to be still.

Though Israel was armed for battle (13:18) and marching out boldly (14:8), the victory would be won by God alone. God miraculously parted the Red Sea (14:21-22) and made dry ground so the Israelites could safely cross to the other side. It was God alone who put the plan into action, causing the Egyptians to follow His chosen people into the sea so they would be drowned as the waters returned to normal. Exodus 14:30-31 (NIV) says: *That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.*

Interpretation

These passages clearly show us that God can do anything--nothing is beyond His power. And we are to give God the glory for our victories. The problem with the Israelites was that they consistently focused on their physical needs instead of trusting God to provide for them and to protect them from their enemies. And even when God answered their cries, their praise and thanks was short-lived. God wants us to trust Him for all our needs--physical, emotional and spiritual. He loves us and truly wants the best for us. When our faith is weak, God uses circumstances in our lives to strengthen us and to draw us to Him.

Like the Israelites, we can be stubborn, not quite ready to believe God can really help us--or that He even wants to. We blame Him for our troubles and whine to anyone who will listen. And so we wander through our deserts without direction, allowing the sands of sin to burn our soles rather than looking to the One who will guide our souls. Instead of bathing in the Son, we stay trapped in the dark, empty and lonely pits we create for ourselves.

Application

Given a choice, we'd choose the smoothly paved highways, not the back roads with potholes. But the bumpy roads help to build character and make us stronger. We don't cozy up to the detours in our lives, but they are necessary if we are to become the people God wants us to be.

Are you growing impatient as you wait on God to answer a specific need in your life today? You will find contentment when you completely trust God to know what is best for you today, next week and always.