

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

THE FALL OF JERICHO – JOSHUA 5:13–6:27

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*“The Exodus isn’t just the celebration of one miracle. It’s the remembrance of a long series of miracles, involving God’s continuous intervention in the history of His people. Event after event led to Israel’s final deliverance, each step along the way an integral part of the overall plan.”*

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**THE EXODUS MIRACLE**

Perhaps the best place to begin our observations about some of the great miracles of the Bible should be with the Exodus of God’s people from Egypt. To be sure, there are many miracles which precede this special event. The creation of the world is only one of them. Others would include the deliverance of Noah and his family from the flood, the tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the providential care provided Joseph as he rose to power and fame in Egypt. But the Exodus is the paramount miracle of the Old Testament, even as the Resurrection is the foremost miracle of the New Testament. As we consider the many and various ways in which our Lord has intervened in the history of His creation to alter the course of events, perhaps there is no better place to begin than the deliverance of His people from Egyptian slavery. So many of God’s miracles involve deliverance and liberation from enslavement in one form or another.

The book of Exodus begins by reminding us that after Joseph’s death in Egypt, his descendants multiplied through a number of generations. In fact, the people of Israel grew at such an alarming rate that the Egyptian leaders began to fear their own race would be overwhelmed and superseded by the Israelites. This seems to be an ongoing human concern in the history of mankind. One tribe grows more quickly than another. The Germanic people multiply faster than the French, the Japanese more quickly than the Europeans, the peoples of the third world more rapidly than those of the first world. And with each change in the course of the demographic stream, those who see their race or nationality grow less predominant begin to experience a growing fear for their future and a threat to their cultural integrity. This is one

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*As always, the Lord had a plan of deliverance for His people. Although the Hebrews were downtrodden and oppressed, a bright and glorious future awaited them. If they could only hold on to the faith and trust of their fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!*

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spectacular way the devil roils our world with conflict. And his strategy was particularly effective when it involved the Egyptians and the Israelites. Because of their fears, the Egyptians turned their growing Israelite counterparts into slaves, hoping to eliminate a sizeable portion of God's people through hard work and little food. The people of God who had known such joy and freedom in the Lord's promises, now found themselves under the iron rule of their Egyptian taskmasters.

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Already, the plan was in action. The Pharaoh, alarmed because the people of Israel kept growing in numbers despite his oppression, decided more drastic action was needed. He commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the baby boys which they delivered, and save only the girls. In time, the Pharaoh hoped, this would decimate the Hebrew population. Many infants were killed, and the horror of the ongoing massacre brought despair and

hopelessness to God's people; yet the Lord's plan for deliverance continued.

Through the tender heart of Pharaoh's daughter, one Hebrew infant named Moses was delivered from certain death. Moses' mother built a basket of bulrushes, daubed it with tar and pitch, and then floated her infant son down the Nile in front of the place where Pharaoh's daughter was bathing. Pharaoh's daughter was so moved by the sight of this young child, she captured him and raised him as her own. She named him "Moses" which sounds very much like the Hebrew for "draw out," a fitting name for one who was drawn out from the river, and who would deliver God's people by drawing them out of Egypt (Exodus 2:10).

As the Hebrew people continued to suffer enslavement, Moses grew into a man. Through the years of Israel's pain, God's act of deliverance drew nearer and nearer. Day by day, week by week and year by year, Moses became the adult God had chosen to lead Israel. Moses would grow each day at a natural, normal rate. No supernatural intervention would occur until God's time was just right. How often have we called on the Lord's intervention, only to hear silence followed by stillness! Again and again we

talk to Him. And then, one day, when we least expect it, the Lord acts!

Moving deeper into the desert in search of pasture for his father-in-law's flocks, Moses encountered a strange sight. A bush was burning without being consumed. Suddenly, the "laws of nature," as we might call them, were suspended. God was intervening (Exodus 3:2).

God called Moses to lead God's people out of slavery into a promised land. Moses, of course, was horrified. He had no special qualifications for this task. He had never been to any leadership seminars; he hadn't gained any special eloquence in either Hebrew or Egyptian. He was just a shepherd. But the Lord had chosen him for an unparalleled task and Moses, whether he liked it or not, would follow the Lord's will. This was God's plan, after all. He was intervening in the course of history to bring deliverance.

Moses, and his brother Aaron, were called upon to confront the Egyptian Pharaoh. Now, naturally, Pharaoh had no intention of just letting his slaves go free. What would happen to his economy, his many construction projects, and, of course, the perverse superiority of lording it over an underclass? Of course he wouldn't voluntarily let the Hebrews enjoy their freedom. And so, the Lord began intervening in a number of ways.

Moses was given power to inflict plagues on the people of Egypt. If the Egyptian people were to feel the consequences of violating God's will, they would become discontent and angry at their leadership, and place a tremendous pressure on the Pharaoh to free

God's people. First, Moses and Aaron smote the river Nile with a rod and the river became blood before the eyes of Pharaoh and his court. The fish died and the water became undrinkable; the Egyptian people began to suffer (Exodus 7:20-21).

When Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go, frogs came swarming out of the river, covering the land, hopping into people's food and into their beds and making life miserable. Then lice arose from the dust of the earth and afflicted both man and beast. Then followed swarms of flies, cattle disease, an epidemic of boils, hailstorms that destroyed the crops, clouds of locusts that ate any crops remaining, and three days of total darkness (Exodus 8-11).

In the past years of living in Southern California, many of us have endured a taste of these ten plagues. Over the course of years, we experienced floods, brush fires, riots, severe earthquakes and drought. It is enough to numb the senses. I have the feeling if a modern day Moses had arisen and proclaimed, "Let my people go," most Angelinos would have handed over their car keys, described the nearest route to the freeway, and waved goodbye.

Well, something like that happened to the Egyptians. But it took one final plague to drag them beyond the limits of their endurance. The last plague was the worst. In every Egyptian home the eldest son was struck dead, from the king's son to the son of the worst felon in prison. Perhaps this was perfect justice for a kingdom which had at one time demanded the death of every male baby born to the Israelites.

The Egyptians now had a taste of their own cruel and savage behavior. By morning, the nation knew the meaning of horror. And the Israelites learned the meaning of "Passover," because when the angel of death strode in fury through the Egyptian streets, only those Israelites who had smeared the blood of sacrificed lambs on their door posts escaped the angel's wrath. In essence, God's anger "passed over" them.

The Pharaoh summoned Moses and surrendered unconditionally. All the people of Israel were to leave immediately. The Egyptians were so desirous of their departure, they gave the Israelites costly gifts and demanded they leave the country. "Just get out," they cried, and God's people were free.

They were free, at least, until Pharaoh once again changed his mind and wished to herd the Israelites back to captivity. What a strange and stubborn man to experience so many plagues and still feel the need to contradict God's will! The Bible states that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. It must have been, indeed, to behave in such a stubborn and self-destructive manner. With all the chariots of Egypt, Pharaoh began the chase to recapture the Israelites. It would lead them to the Red Sea, where Moses and the people of Israel stood puzzling at their escape. How could they cross this body of water and escape the onrushing armies of the powerful Egyptians? Where would they go? Many surely felt they would be

slaughtered or drowned and they looked to Moses for answers.

Moses stood up and pronounced some of the most inspiring words of the Old Testament. He shouted, "Do not be afraid! Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:13-14).

And with that, Moses stretched his rod over the sea. A strong wind arose, parting the waters so that a wall of water stood on the right side of the people, and another wall of water on the left side. The people of Israel walked right through the divided water on dry land and reached the other side safely. When the last man and animal had crossed over, the Egyptian armies began their race across the dry land where the sea once lay. But their chariot wheels stuck in the mud and fell off. Moses raised his hand and the wind abruptly stopped.

Finally, the Egyptians gained a glimpse of their folly in fighting God. They panicked. All army discipline collapsed and they fled for the shoreline. We can only imagine the sense of desperation felt by the Egyptian army as they watched the waters collapse around them. The rushing sound of the wind was suddenly replaced by the roaring of the mighty waters, and every Egyptian soldier was drowned (Exodus 14:26-31).

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*Hear again the words of Moses to his people:  
“Do not be afraid! Stand firm and you will see  
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It took many years for the Lord's plan to reach its fruition, and many acts of intervention which ranged from the mundane to the spectacular. Moses was a grown man before he was able to experience the deliverance of God's people from Egypt. But throughout his life, the Lord had been patiently, carefully preparing events for the great miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. He had touched the heart of Pharaoh's daughter so that she would protect the infant Moses from certain death. He allowed Moses to grow in Pharaoh's court so that Moses would be familiar with the customs and language of the Egyptians as well as the Hebrews. He had called Moses to demand the Hebrews' release from Pharaoh and given Moses the power to unleash 10 deadly plagues. He had allowed the people of Israel to escape the Lord's wrath at Passover, and delivered them from the water of the Red Sea.

So, you see, the Exodus isn't just the celebration of one miracle. It's the remembrance of a long series of miracles, involving God's continuous intervention in the history of His people. Event after event led to Israel's final deliverance, each step along the way an integral part of the overall plan.

It is important that we who profess to be children of God view our Lord's actions in the same way. Our lives are a series of events by which the Lord unfolds His purpose and power. When we struggle against His will for our lives, we face a futile and exhausting battle. When we follow His will, we will find Him working through us to perform His remarkable deeds. Hear again the words of Moses to his people: “Do not be afraid! Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today... The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

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*Father in heaven, I pray for a greater appreciation of the miracles You have performed, past and present. Help me to see Your hand guiding me in my life, even as You led the people of Israel. Be with me as I study Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

1. To whom does “the army of the Lord” refer in 5:14? (2 Kings 6:8-18; Matthew 26:53; Revelation 5:11)

Who is “commander of the army of the Lord?” (Daniel 12:1)

The army of the Lord incorporates more than spiritual beings. Who is the Lord using to conquer the Promised Land? (Joshua 1:10-11)

Share a time in your life when the Lord used another human being as an instrument for bringing a “miracle” to you?

2. What does the commander of the Lord’s army tell Joshua to do? (5:15)

Who, and of what experience, does this remind you? (Exodus 3:5-6)

What miracle did the Lord perform for Israel to allow them safe passage into the Promised Land? (Joshua 3:14-17)

Of what similar miracle does this remind you?

Why do you think the Lord is repeating through Joshua some of the miracles He performed through Moses? (Joshua 1:5)

3. When the people of Israel arrive at Jericho, how do they find the city? (6:1)

Why? (Joshua 2:9-11)

4. How many days are the people of Israel to march around Jericho? (6:3, 15)

How many priests, blowing how many trumpets, and how many times did they march around the city on the seventh day? (6:4)

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In these references how does the Lord use the same number?  
Genesis 2:2

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Exodus 12:19

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Exodus 20:10

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Revelation 1:16, 20

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In these few verses, what seems to be the Lord's favorite number?

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5. Describe how you picture the wall of Jericho falling. (6:20)

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6. Which citizens of Jericho were spared the destruction and why? (6:22–25)

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What would be the sign by which these individuals would be spared, and who would not be spared? (Joshua 2:18–19)

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What other event does this resemble? (Exodus 12:7, 13)

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7. What curse did Joshua put on the city of Jericho forever? (6:26)

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Relate what happened in 1 Kings 16:34.

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Who else is under the threat of the Lord's curse? (Matthew 25:41–43)

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When we think of the Lord's "miracles," we often consider them solely and purely beneficial to those who are involved. How has this question placed a different perspective on the related effects miracles can have on those who reject the Lord?

Why should this not alarm us? (Romans 8:28)

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8. To what personal miracle does the Bible equate the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, and by their similarities, the crossing of the Jordan? (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

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Because the Bible makes this link between the deliverance of God's people through these waters and His children's deliverance from Satan through the waters of baptism, how often have you witnessed a miracle as great as the crossing of the Jordan? Do you know the date of your baptism and how do you celebrate this great miracle?

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9. Why was it so important that the people of Israel bring the Ark of the Covenant with them as they circle Jericho and await its destruction in Joshua 6:6? (Exodus 25:22)

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How might this suggest we may find a bit of extra courage when we confront the world with a Bible in our hands?

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