

What Just Happened?

Opener: What transition have you enjoyed most?

Scripture: The Song of Moses and Miriam. “You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies. ¹³In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. ¹⁴The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. ¹⁵The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; ¹⁶terror and dread will fall on them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone—until your people pass by, Lord, until the people you bought pass by. ¹⁷You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance—the place, Lord, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hands established. ¹⁸“The Lord reigns for ever and ever.” ¹⁹When Pharaoh’s horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. ²⁰Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. ²¹Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.” Exodus 15:12-21

Here’s what let up to Exodus 15:12-21. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for generations, originally settling there during a famine when Joseph was a high-ranking Egyptian official. But as they multiplied they were perceived as a threat and so they were enslaved. God called Moses, an Israelite raised in Pharaoh’s household, to confront Pharaoh with His demand to “Let my people go.” But Pharaoh refused and so God sent 10 devastating plagues that increased in severity to demonstrate His power. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. God instructed the Israelites to mark their doorposts with lamb’s blood so that the Angel of Death would pass over their homes. This act of faith spared their firstborn. Pharaoh finally relented and allowed the Israelites to leave. But then regretted his decision and pursued and trapped them at the Red Sea.

God instructed Moses to stretch his hand over the sea and the waters parted, creating a path for the Israelites to cross. The Egyptian army followed, but once the Israelites were safely across, Moses stretched out his hand again, and the waters returned, drowning Pharaoh’s forces. On the other side, they celebrated their deliverance with Moses and Miriam’s song.

Discussion Questions

- Exodus 15:12 says, “You stretch out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies.” Given their extraordinary circumstances, it’s difficult to imagine ourselves being in that situation. However, we’ve all had experiences in which we felt trapped between the “devil and the deep blue sea.” But then God intervened. Describe a time when you felt trapped and then super relieved.
- Exodus 15:13 recognizes that God would guide them as they continue their journey. At this point the Israelites were in a “now what” situation. What guidance do we need when we’ve cleared a major hurdle but know we’ve got a long way to go? Examples?
- Exodus 15:14-16 notes that potential enemies will melt away in fear of God’s great power. What potential enemies do we face as we follow the Lord and how do they melt away? Do they always? Why or why not?
- Exodus 15:17-19 makes it clear that there’s a destination and the Lord will get them (and us) there. There’s a destination for each day, destinations along the journey, and a final destination. How would you describe each one and how do we know when or if we get there?
- What could keep us from reaching the destination(s) the Lord has for us? When we get sidetracked, how can we get back on track?
- Looking back, what’s the most valuable lesson you’ve learned from making it through a major transition?

Wrap Up: When the Israelites first entered the wilderness, they were on an emotional high. After years of oppression in Egypt, months of plagues, and days of traveling that ended with the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, they passed through the water on dry ground. Behind them they watched as the Egyptians were swept away. Their difficulties were surely at an end now. A few more weeks of traveling and they would enter the Promised Land, where the Lord would quickly dispose of the Canaanites, enabling them to live happily ever after. What could possibly go wrong if God was with them? They were about to find out.