Bible Study Twenty-Two December 8th, 2021

The Book of Exodus

Exodus 13: 19f. Moses led the people to the shores of the Red Sea. The text explains that he carried with him the bones of ‘Joseph.’ This is very important for it relates to the origins of the Hebrews in Egypt. It was Joseph who saved the 12 tribes, the sons of Jacob.

The text here is quite exact. Probably because the story was told and retold every year at Passover. God goes before them by day as a ‘pillar of cloud’ and by night by a ‘pillar of fire.’ The instruction of where to camp by the sea is very precise. The writing makes it clear that it is God who ‘hardens’ the heart of Pharaoh. The writer sets the scene for a dramatic exit for the Hebrews; something spectacular, something that would be remembered for hundreds if not thousands of years. God will be glorified, and the Hebrews saved.

The Hebrews complain in 14:11f “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us out into the desert to die?” Moses replies:

“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance of our God.’

Moses is told to stretch out his arm and staff to divide the waters. Meanwhile the pillar of fire moves behind the Hebrews, separating them from the chariots of the Egyptians. The waters divide leaving dry land with a wall of water both left and right.

The Egyptians follow the Hebrews into the divide, but Yahweh lets their wheels fall off and cause confusion. Then Moses stretches out his arm and staff and the waters return falling on the Egyptians and their chariots. “Not one of them survived.”

The story is indeed dramatic. It is a story that is immediately visual to the eye. It is an image that long remains in the memory of Israel. The event is commemorated by “The Song of Moses and Miriam.” It is a canticle of praise to the God who brought the people out of Egypt. It takes up most of chapter 15.

This is the halfway point of Exodus. After it will come “the Manna and the Quail.” Later the Covenant and the 10 commandments, which we will return to in a few weeks. Next week we will study the “Nativity Stories of Matthew and Luke’s’ Gospels in preparation for Christmas.

Read chapters 13, 14, and 15

Answer these questions to yourself:

1. Why did the Hebrews leave Egypt by the Red Sea Route and not on the coastal highway along the Mediterranean Sea to Canaan?
2. Why did Pharaoh change his mind about freeing the Hebrews?
3. Was the Crossing of the Red Sea really that dynamic or did they escape across a muddy marshland that flooded?
4. In the writing who is the true hero of the story?