

Title: The long, the hard, the only way - Exodus 13v17-14v31

Purpose: To understand what the term SALVATION means. A CROSSING OVER from one thing to another. This is fleshed out in stages they must go through: no shortcut, into a cul-de-sac & out through a no-exit.

INTRODUCTION

The greatest OT event

If I were to ask you:

Q. What is the greatest event in the NT - what would you say?

The Cross & the Resurrection (a sort of inseparable pair).

Ok - let's turn the question across to the OT now:

Q. Amongst all the miraculous happenings in the OT - which stands the tallest, which is the greatest event of all?

Well, I think my answer to that question would be this very passage that we come to here in the book of Exodus - the CROSSING OF THE RED SEA (what is called "The Exodus").

Q. Now why is this the greatest miracle, the greatest event?:

- AFTERALL - it's *not* actually the most **CATAclysmic** - I think the world-wide flood in Noah's time is bigger
- AND ALSO - it's probably *not* the most **CHARISMATIC** event either - I guess for this we might prefer the occasion half-a-dozen chapters further on **where God comes down on top of mount Sinai and speaks DIRECTLY to an entire nation at once** in such a devastatingly fearful way that the people beg not to hear His voice anymore lest they die!!
- Q. SO WHY GREATEST THEN?
Well because it is an event that, unlike most other events, **has a continual and constant stream of BACK-REFERENCES** through all the rest of Scripture.

The back-references surveyed

Let me do a brief survey of some of them - because in this way we will make sure we are picking up and attaching the right meaning to this greatest of all events.

And I want to DISTILL OUT half-a-dozen CONNECTIONS that will really help us see this event in a whole-of-Scripture light:

1) The FIRST is that of SINGING and PRAISING:

And for this you don't have to look beyond the very next chapter. Exodus 15 is where we get the first song in Scripture and it is very evidently a SONG OF PRAISE - if you like this was the very first episode (before the BBC got the idea) of "Songs of Praise"!

The book of Psalms has many praise songs in it and not surprisingly at least half-a-dozen pick up the theme of praise in direct connection to Exodus 14 and the Crossing of the Red Sea.

Psalm 136 has as its theme "Give thanks to the LORD for he is good. His love endures for ever." and specifically it goes on "who divided the Red Sea ... brought Israel through the midst of it...but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea. His love endures for ever."

So that's the first very obvious connection.

2) The SECOND is that of SLAVERY and SUFFERING:

Judges 6 verse 8 "I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of **SLAVERY**. I snatched you from the power of Egypt and from the hand of all your **OPPRESSORS**."

and again:

1 Kings 8 verse 51 "for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that **IRON-SMELTING FURNACE**."

The third is something of a reality check, lest we feel a bit triumphant about things:

3) The THIRD is that of SIN and REBELLION:

Psalm 106 verse 6-12 "We have **sinned**, even as our fathers did; we have **done wrong and acted wickedly**. When our fathers were in Egypt, they **gave no thought to your miracles**; they **did not remember your many kindnesses**, and **they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea**. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert. He saved them from the hand of the foe; from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them. The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived. Then they believed his promises and sang his praise. "

Yes there was the singing of His praises at the end of things BUT in the midst of it all we have to realise that the setting was one of an ongoing, continual unbelief and rebellion.

3) The FOURTH is that of COMING OUT and getting REPLANTED:

Daniel 9 verse 15 "Now, O Lord our God, who **brought your people out of Egypt** with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, ..."

Psalm 80 verse 8 "You **brought a vine out of Egypt**; you drove out the nations and **planted it**."

5) The FIFTH is that of HIS POWER and HIS REPUTATION:

Nehemiah 9 verse 9ff "You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. You sent **miraculous signs and wonders** against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You **made a name for yourself**, which remains to this day. "

Isaiah 63 verse 12 "...who sent his glorious **arm of power** to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself **everlasting renown**, who led them through the depths..."

6) So LASTLY and SIXTHLY the LINKAGE TO JESUS and HIS WORK OF SALVATION:

Hosea 11 verse 1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."

And you may remember hearing that verse read at Christmas time because this is the linkage to Jesus when he returns as a young child with Mary and Joseph to go and live up in Nazareth in Galilee after the death of Herod.

It is a back reference to the CROSSING OF THE RED SEA, to taking his people out of Egypt.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 we get that linkage put more strongly - I'll read the opening few verses:

(1 Corinthians 10 verse 1-4) "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ."

What I want us to do is to follow the 3 stages of this greatest of all OT events that appear here at the end of Exodus 13 and then through Exodus 14. And in doing this we are going to be tracing what is essentially the regularly trod - "ROAD OF SALVATION".

SO #1:

1] THE LONG WAY - No shortcuts allowed

Now in this first section, (so this is Chapter 13 verse 17 thru 22), we see **a couple of things right there on the surface** and which **serve to encourage us**:

- **the FIRST is that** the JOURNEY OF SALVATION is one that is "GUIDED".

Verse 21 "the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way..."

And what this means is that you do not have to make it up as you go along. When it comes to SALVATION the stakes are too high for God to allow us to be INVENTORS!

- **the SECOND thing** is that from the outset **FAITH needs to be "ONBOARD"**.

Verse 19 "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, 'God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.'"

Carrying with them the bones of Joseph served as a permanent reminder that FAITH needed to be with them at all times.

Q. How is your FAITH in God and His ways and promises doing these days? Q. Have you perhaps somewhat lost sight of it?

I guess if the Israelites had taken account of these two factors then they wouldn't have become unsettled so very quickly.

On a strange route!!

Q. I would be interested to know just how long it took for the very first murmurings to start happening?

You see no sooner have they left they are taking the road Southwards, the road towards the desert and the Red Sea.

No doubt the more savvy ones are saying to themselves - this is a bit odd - surely we're going completely in the opposite direction - because Canaan is to the North East and we're going pretty well directly south!!

Q. Does this bother you about CHRISTIANITY?

The fact that it does not seem to go in the way you think it should. That many times the way that it leads is counter-intuitive to you, to what you may well consider to be good old common sense.

Well just think about it for a moment - Q. Would we really respect trust a God who simply did what we would have done?

Think of that amazing story of Solomon's wisdom - when he has to decide which of 2 mums a baby belongs to and so his solution is: "Get a sword and let's cut the baby in two!!"

Within seconds the matter was resolved and everybody stood back and say WOW - Q. Where did he get wisdom like that from?!!

So if you think that you understand the way that the LORD will take in your life as He crosses you over from death to life then THINK AGAIN.

Clearly God was deliberately ignoring the sign that said "Canaan only 100 miles that way"!! He was saying "My SAVING ways are *not* amenable to SHORTCUTS.

You see God really does know us through and through, he knows every hair on your head, and he knew that the Israelites were *not* up to going on the direct route. It would destroy them and send them running back to Egypt and back to the land of slavery and death.

You have to learn to journey on the ROAD THAT LEADS TO SALVATION taking with you the faith of Joseph, which of course was that same unshakeable faith that Abraham had before him.

So FIRSTLY then THE LONG WAY - now #2:

2] THE HARD WAY - The cul-de-sac option is chosen

Now Verse 2 of Chapter 14 says:

"Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon."

Commenting on this particular route FB Meyer has this to say:

"On one side of them was Migdol and impassable wastes of sand; on the other was the Red Sea. East of them, or as it might be in front, was the impassable mountain range of Baal Zephon. **IT WAS THE PERFECT CUL-DE-SAC!!**"

If going South in the first place seemed a bit odd, now that they were actually "turning around" and backing themselves into a complete corner - clearly this HAD to be wrong!!

The army of the Egyptians in response to this evident foolhardiness set out hard on their heels with all of their best chariots manned with their best men.

They very quickly appear on the horizon and then we get treated to some pretty "choice" words from the Israelites:

Verse 11&12 "They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'"

So much more than meets the eye

You know it is true that when God is at work in our lives there is always much more going on than meets the eye.

One shrewd observer wrote (**George Morrison**):

"It took one night to take Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to take Egypt out of Israel."

And so God is much more busily at work behind the scenes than we probably realise.

Balak and Balaam episode

When the Israelites, a few years from now, would be comfortably camped on the plains of Moab, playing badminton with their children and wondering when the cloud of God's presence would move again indicating that they had to move on - little did they know all of the spiritual battles that were being fought just beyond their line of sight where Balak was trying to get the pagan prophet Balaam to curse the people of Israel again and again and again.

How easily we can be fooled into thinking that God is not at work just because we can't see what He's doing!

Backed into a corner

In these opening verses of **chapter 14** we see that God is deliberately backing His people into a corner.

Q. Why does He do that? Q. Is this really very fair?

Well think about it this way - if He does not do this Q. are you really going to stay still and simply allow Him to do His work in your life? I think most of us have Olympic skills in the art of wriggling. As soon as God starts putting His divine finger on some area of our lives - very likely we will shift position and effectively bat His hand away.

We should not resist God when we sense that He is knocking out the supports in our life, that He is constantly putting inexplicable blockages in our path. God hems us in for a good purpose.

New birth very painful - hotly contested

For the Israelites now they come to the place where they are going to be truly BORN AGAIN - they are going to gain a new identity as A NEW NATION UNDER THE RULE AND DIRECTION OF THEIR GOD.

Now birth is always difficult and is frequently attended with a lot of pain and this birth is not going to be any different.

This final passage of Israel out of Egypt is not going to happen without a struggle. Q. Do you really think that Satan will stand idly by when someone is taken from his dominion and transferred into the kingdom of God?

Satan will always be throwing his toys out of the pram when it comes to anyone making an application to transfer out of his kingdom.

Egypt is a codeword, a symbol for Satan's kingdom and no expense is spared to get Israel to return where they belong under his control, slaving in his kingdom.

Never think that becoming a Christian is something easy. It wasn't easy for Jesus to open the way at the Cross - it also isn't easy for any to take that way of the cross - it is a hotly contested way.

And the people feel the heat and are like a typical weather vane - their heads are turned.

Maybe this is exactly like you when you are nearing the point of taking steps **into** (or perhaps **further into**) the Kingdom of God that Satan turns up the heat to make you think twice.

Satan reminds you about what others will think: your parents, your sister, your brother - perhaps your colleague who is very critical about faith and religion.

But in God's wisdom pain has a point and it serves to make your salvation, your crossing over all the more memorable, all the more certain, all the more clear that it is God that has brought it to pass.

No one chooses the hard way

The truth is that no one chooses the hard way - but when you look back, the hard way, (when it is God's hard way), has served you well and you wouldn't choose to have it any other way.

Verse 13 - Moses' instructions

See [verse 13](#) and Moses' instructions to them:

"Moses answered the people, '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.'"

You've all seen the mugs: "Keep calm and carry on" - well this sounds a bit similar "Stand firm you only need to be still".

What they were about to witness, in the very midst of a brief hardship, would stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives. Looking back to the day of their salvation would always and forever put a smile on their faces.

THE ROAD OF SALVATION then is frequently the LONG WAY and it is also, more often than not, the HARD WAY, but it is also #3:

3] THE ONLY WAY - Making the crossing at the no exit

So we come to the great event itself and one thing you cannot avoid from the text is that this is clearly a miracle.

[Verse 21ff](#) "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, **and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.**"

Just in case we didn't get that the first time, it is repeated in [Verse 29](#):

[\(Verse 29\)](#) "But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left."

The Egyptians were expecting either to indulge their blood-lust in a beach massacre OR if no that, to simply round them all up and send them back the 3 day journey the way they had come.

But they were forgetting something. They were forgetting that these people were now sheltering under the blood of the Passover Lamb.

Passover -> Cross over

We looked at that two weeks ago when we looked at the STORY OF THE LAMB as it unfolds in Scripture with Abraham and with Moses and ultimately fulfilled in and through Jesus - the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

You see the blood on the doorposts was the sign, the symbol and to go with that now was to be something that would SEAL and DELIVER it.

With PASSOVER there was now to be the sealing CROSS OVER when they would physically go through the sea of God's righteous judgment but on dry ground and come out safely on the other side.

Cross -> Resurrection

If you think this sounds just a little strange consider this:

THE CROSS - which was the woodwork upon which the blood of Jesus our LAMB was smeared - was then SEALED 3 days later by the RESURRECTION whereby the risen Lord emerged unscathed on the other side of death and God's righteous judgment.

(Notice, by the way, the 3 days that had passed for the Israelites between these events - you can calculate this by the number of places where they camp, assuming that they travelled for a day at a time)

The sea

Q. Did you ever think what the sea symbolized?

Well it is a symbol of God's righteous wrath against all and every sin - for He truly is an all-holy God who cannot look upon sin. Our God has a complete, 100% sin-intolerance.

And as the book of [Romans reminds us in chapter 3 and verse 23](#) ["For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."](#)

This spiritual reality is foreshadowed for us first very early on the worldwide flood under Noah when God judges mankind and saves Noah and his family by bringing him THROUGH THE SEA.

Now God pictures it again by taking not just a family but a nation through the sea of God's judgment.

Q. Has God taken YOU through the sea of His Righteous Judgment yet? Q. Are you safe on the other side?

The Egyptians were dead

There were two things that told them that they had truly crossed over:

- FIRST - that they were on the other side - (yeah, pretty obvious I know!)
- and SECOND that, as Verse 30 says, that "Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore."

Putting this into NT language, as [Galatians 6 verse 14](#) describes it:

[Galatians 6 verse 14](#) "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

Baptism - something very dramatic

There's no doubt that the Israelites crossing the Red Sea **WAS A VERY DRAMATIC SIGHT** and just as the Sea was deep so is the meaning.

The NT makes the imagery clear for us:

1 Corinthians 10 and the opening few verses read: "For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

- They all went down into certain death IN THEIR MEDIATOR MOSES and emerged alive on the other side victorious

AND THIS IS A PERFECT FORESHADOWING OF

- Us going down into death IN OUR BETTER MEDIATOR - CHRIST JESUS - and we too will on the third day emerge fully victorious also just as Jesus has done

CONCLUSION

It was the GREATEST OT EVENT when the Israelites, following the shedding of blood 3 days later **CROSSED OVER UP & OUT** of certain death.

It was the GREATEST NT EVENT when Jesus, the greater Moses, shed His blood & 3 days later **CROSSED OVER/UP/& OUT OF DEATH**.

The Israelites got through because they were **UNITED** - Baptised into Moses.

We get through because the offer stands for us to be **UNITED** through faith in **JESUS**.

On the **ROAD OF SALVATION** - The **LONG WAY** is in & shortcuts are out

On the **ROAD OF SALVATION** - The **HARD WAY** is normal & the cul-de-sac is necessary

On the **ROAD OF SALVATION** - The **ONLY WAY** is by the no exit through our wonderful mediator Jesus.

Let us pray ... **AMEN**