

MIGHTY DEEDS FOR A MIGHTY GOD

EXODUS 14:1-31

TOBY SUMPTER

TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH - MOSCOW, ID

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN TRINITY SEASON

A.D. NOVEMBER 21, 2010

INTRODUCTION

The crossing of the Red Sea is the climax of the Exodus from Egypt. It is the death and resurrection of Israel, the triumphant overthrow of all her enemies, and the revelation that Yahweh is God, and He fights for His people.

YAHWEH'S ARMIES

Israel is going up out of Egypt in military formation, as the armies of Yahweh (12:37, 41, 51, 13:18). This means that Pharaoh's "camp" is coming up against Yahweh's "camp" (Ex. 14:19-20). It looks like Pharaoh's 600 chariots are coming down on a defenseless refugee camp, but God thinks of it much differently: Israel is Yahweh's victorious army (having just plundered the Egyptians), and now Yahweh is planning to ambush them and finish them off (14:3-4). It's the Angel of God that is leading them; Yahweh is in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (13:21, 14:19). The cloud is shade in the hot, desert wilderness by day and warmth and protection by night. And this glory cloud is a shield for Israel (14:19-20).

It's worth noting how many times the words chariots (12) and horsemen (7) appear in this story (in Ex. 14-15). Chariots were like the ancient world's version of a tank. But God's glory cloud is also associated with chariots in Scripture (Ez. 1, 10). Remember the horses and chariots of fire that take Elijah up into heaven (2 Kgs. 2:11) and the chariots that surround Elisha in the city when the Arameans attack (2 Kgs. 6:14-17, cf. 2 Kgs. 7:6). God is the chariot of Israel. It was the Angel of Yahweh who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and it is the Angel of the Lord who is associated elsewhere with the captain of Yahweh's hosts (Josh. 5:13ff).

Not only is Israel Yahweh's army, not only are His angels His army, but Yahweh is the hero of the army of Israel and fights for them (14:14, 25). Even though Israel's response is initially unbelief and fear (14:10-13), Yahweh chooses carefully which battles to lead his people into (13:17, 14:3-4). And God is setting an ambush for Pharaoh (14:3-4, 17-18). Psalm 77 describes Yahweh's glory cloud as a mighty thunderstorm (77:16-20), and Moses says that God took off their chariot wheels (14:24-25). And this is how the Lord overthrew the entire Egyptian army (14:27-28) and saved Israel (14:29-31).

GOD CHOOSES OUR BATTLES

God always chooses our battles. Sometimes this is plain and obvious with severe sickness or disease, and sometimes it is less obvious with making plans for the future. As much as possible, we should make sure that this is where God wants us, and then we should dig in with faith.

THE LORD FIGHTS FOR YOU

It would not have been more faithful for one of the Israelites to charge the Egyptian chariots with a pitchfork. Faith means watching God fight for us, and it means watching God fight for us when it looks like He might not. And our nation does not know how to do this because we have not shown them.

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TRC exists as a collection of sinner-saints in Moscow, Idaho who have been delivered from bondage to sin, death, and Satan and brought out through the waters of baptism into the freedom of the Triune God in His body, the Church (cf. I Cor. 10:1-7, Col. 2:8-16). The God who saved Israel in the first Exodus is the same God who raised Jesus from the dead in the second Exodus, and when Jesus sends us to serve and love the city of Moscow, He does so as the commander of the armies of God. He sends us with His full authority and power (Mt. 28:18-20). Our job is to see the mighty works, fear the God of heaven, and believe Him and His Word (Ex. 14:31).



*PUBLISHED BY: CANON PRESS ? P.O. BOX 8729 ? 205 E. 5TH ST. ? MOSCOW, ID 83843
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PHONE 800-488-2034 ? FAX 208-882-1568*