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The Resurrection of Our Lord

Exodus 15:1-11

### REMEMBER GOD'S MIGHTY RESCUE

Today we consider one of the best songs ever written. Its composer was not Paul McCartney, Rogers and Hammerstein, or Mercy Me. It was composed by God the Holy Spirit. Therefore it's the best. It was not set to music in the last 35 years, but about 3500 years ago. It is called the Song of Moses. It's the first written song we have a record of in the history of the Church.

Perhaps this reading struck you a little strange. What does this song by Moses have to do with Easter Sunday? For that matter, what does it have to do with us?

To answer that, we need to take a closer look at the song itself. Perhaps you have seen the dramatic rendition of the parting of the Red Sea in the 1956 movie "The Ten Commandments" starring Charlton Heston. But this is more than a movie. It actually happened.

400 years the Israelites had been enslaved in Egypt. God came to their rescue. He sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. But when their way was blocked by the Red Sea and Egypt's military forces closed in behind them, it seemed the Israelites were doomed. Then God rescued them in a way that no one could have imagined. God split the waters of the sea. This Song of Moses says, "*At the blast from your nostrils the waters piled up. The flowing waters stood up like a dam. The deep waters became solid in the heart of the sea.*" The people of Israel walked through the sea on dry ground—every last one of them.

When Pharaoh tried to pursue, this song tells us: "*He has cast Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea. His elite officers are*

*drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters covered them. They sank down to the depths like a stone.*"

Some of you are old enough to remember when World War II came to an end, or when the Berlin wall was torn down, or the statue of Saddam Hussein in Iraq was toppled. Do you remember the celebrations? How people literally danced for joy? This is like the glee Moses and the people of God felt after their mighty rescue from Egypt. They were told to do nothing but wait for God's mighty rescue. But now they busied themselves with the serious work of giving thanks in song.

And a mighty labor of love this song was. Do not imagine this to be some chaotic Woodstock music festival out in the desert. This liturgical song was specially prepared and powerfully crafted to be pregnant with meaning, profoundly descriptive, and squeezed full of doctrine in retelling God's mighty acts. This song was meant to teach—to help people for ages to come remember who God is and how He rescues His people.

In fact, the Song of Moses set the tone for believers throughout the rest of Bible history. Had God not preserved the Israelites there would never have been a Savior, a Jesus Christ. God's promise was that the Savior was going to come from the Jews. Thus the mighty waters came crashing down on Pharaoh's head. God decisively wipes out those who stand in the way of His saving Will from happening. Nothing was left of the menacing army but floating bodies and carcasses strewn along the beach.

In this way Moses' song at the Red Sea gives substance to all the songs of the Church thereafter in all its great conflicts against the powers of darkness. This song echoes its theme of mighty rescue throughout the Psalms, the songs of Isaiah, the lamentations of Jeremiah, Mary's Song, the Song of Simeon, the epistles of Peter and even the Song of the Lamb in the book of Revelation articulated by the saints who have gained the victory over the beast and his image and stand upon the sea of glass. It's always a song of God's mighty rescue.

In the same way we use an ancient liturgy that can't be categorized into any particular musical style. It rises above all styles, languages, cultures, and times, and in so doing it brings all the people of God together and keeps us all mindful of the mightiest acts of God -things like: *O Christ, Lamb of God you take away the sin of the world.*

We need the reality of God's mighty rescue constantly held before us. The Red Sea and Pharaoh's army are not the only ways people can die. Death itself is like a vast sea. Death finally swallows up every human on this planet.

You can feel death's early symptoms already. You would love to turn over a new leaf. But the dead-weight of impulse, habit or craving drags you back to the same old vices. When you've lost any distinct recollection of Bible truths you learned once upon a time back in your confirmation days you are feeling the effect of death on your mind. Death is the sensation you are feeling on your heart when your prayers lack passion or when you're hearing or reading the Word of God but nothing's registering. You are feeling death when you are paying the piper now for your youthful indiscretions. Death holds you back from being alive in kindness even to those you love. The early effects of death are the intense tiredness you feel, the increasing stiffness, the decreasing stamina. By contrast, when we're free from sin in heaven we'll be able to dance for a thousand years without getting tired. Death is in your bones with every ache, every illness, every need for surgery, every way your body doesn't work as it should, every new wrinkle or gray hair, and finally a casket and then gnashing of teeth.

So for us merely to talk about issues like stress management, self-improvement, or even social issues as such –it would be about the same as if Moses tried to give the Israelites swimming lessons to escape the Egyptian forces. The Song of Moses describes Pharaoh's voracious appetite: *"The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake. I will divide the plunder; I will do whatever I want with them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.'"*

Let us therefore remember God's mighty rescue! The Song of Moses recounts, *"But you blew with your breath and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Lord, who is like you among the gods? Who is like you –glorious in holiness, awesome in praise, working wonders?"* Sounds similar to, *O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name in all the earth.* Just as decisively as God destroyed Pharaoh and his army God has destroyed death for us. Death may envelope us. But without us so much as lifting a finger the New Testament says, *"Death has been swallowed up in victory!"*

Sin is the source of our death. But Jesus took on Himself the blame for all sin. With a shout He Himself charged into death on the cross. He buried sin with Himself in the tomb. Then He did something even more spectacular, even more surprising than parting the Red Sea. He burst death apart. He came back to life and came out of the grave alive.

His Resurrection means all our sins are forgiven, the cause of our death is wiped away. Being forgiven means we live. Death may still prevail in our bodies here on earth. But at the same time we have received through our baptism a new life, an everlasting life that we have through faith in Jesus right now. Jesus said, *"Whoever lives and believes in me will never die."* The Israelites were not touched by a single drop of water as they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, not one! In the same way death can't possibly touch you and me as we rely on Jesus and He takes us safely to eternity. *Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*

It would be hard for us adequately to describe what happened on 9-11 to someone who hadn't seen it. In the same way, it is hard for us to envision God parting the Red Sea. But from the song of Moses this truth is clear: God always defeats His enemies. On Easter morning, in the person of Christ God defeated sin, guilt, death, hell, satan and all the wickedness of this world. Christ's victory is not partial. It is total. It is dramatic. It is permanent. Christ saves all who believe in Him with a Mighty Rescue.