

THE SONG BY THE RED SEA

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Reading: Exodus 15

The story of the escape of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt is filled with many amazing events and dramatic miracles.

After Egypt had been ruined by the ten plagues, Pharaoh decided to let the children of Israel go. So relieved were the Egyptians to see these Hebrews go that they gave them all kinds of food, clothing and jewels.

Having eaten the Passover, as directed, the children of Israel marched to the shores of the Red Sea. While camped by the sea, they heard a thundering noise, and realized that Pharaoh with his great army of horse-drawn chariots was actually chasing them to bring them back into slavery in Egypt.

Then it was that two more miracles happened in quick order. A pillar of cloud came between the children of Israel and the Egyptians, so that Pharaoh could not see the Israelite camp. Nor could he see that the Lord had actually parted the waters of the Red Sea, and that the children of Israel were escaping on dry ground through the very middle of the sea.

When Pharaoh and his army saw what was happening, and chased after them, he was too late. The wall of water that the Lord had held up to make a path suddenly collapsed and drowned all the Egyptian soldiers.

And now let us imagine the picture that the Lord describes for us of the Hebrew people finally freed from Egyptian bondage. As they looked at the waters of the Red Sea, where the Egyptians had disappeared, the Hebrews suddenly broke out into a song of thanksgiving to the Lord for saving them.

Led by Moses, all the people raised their voices in song. Just imagine the sound of hundreds of thousands of voices singing at one time, with the words they sang echoing across the water.

Never in the whole story of the Word are we given such a picture of joy and gladness in song. And as if this were not enough, Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, then led all the women to sing again, only this time, with dancing and the use of timbrels.

The Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem tells us that the ancient people loved to sing songs to the Lord, especially when they thought about how the Lord would some day come into the world to save the human race. When they

sang such songs about the Lord an amazing thing happened. The angels who were secretly with them, because they too like to sing about the Lord and His Word, rejoiced greatly.

And it is written: “they who sang, and they who heard the songs, had heavenly gladness from the holy and blessed influx which flowed in from heaven, in which they seemed to themselves to be as it were taken up into heaven” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8261:3).

The Writings also tell us that joyous and thankful thoughts about the Lord, “burst forth in the body into various acts, as into songs, and also into dance” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8339).

This was true of the ancients. Could it be true again? Will the people of the New Church find a special delight in songs and music about the Lord? Surely we all feel we can so delight at times of special celebrations, like Christmas or times when we experience great joy, like at a wedding.

But how about the other more regular occasions of our life—occasions of family and church worship and prayer, or times when we conclude a difficult test, or go through a series of unpleasant trials. Do our songs reflect our spirit, our joy, and our thanks and praise to the Lord?

When false, evil, and ugly things attack us for a time, but then seem to vanish like the Egyptians army, let us remember that it is the Lord who overcomes such bad things. Because we have to make such a strong effort to resist and overcome, we feel like we are the ones who conquer evil spirits and chase them away. But this is only the appearance, isn't it? The reality is that the Lord fights for us through our efforts, and in time it is His Word that makes the change in us and removes those who are trying to destroy us.

Let us remember this truth when we think of this magnificent picture of the children of Israel all singing and dancing to praise the Lord. Let us remember it when we think of the wise ancients loving to sing and dance the praises of the Lord. And let us reflect and think to ourselves, what we can do in our own life, and in the life of the New Church to show our joy and delight in the Lord's Word.