

Catechism Story 35

*The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
Memory Verse and Catechism Prayers from the Congregation at Prayer*

BIBLE STORY: THE RED SEA

Exodus 13:17—14:31

Central Thoughts

- Through the real water of the Red Sea and the Word of God, the children of Israel were saved from Pharaoh.
- Through the real water and the Word of God in Holy Baptism, we are forgiven our sins and rescued from death and the power of the devil.
- The Lord returns us to the saving power of our Baptism by leading us to daily contrition and repentance, drowning the Old Adam in us, and raising up the new man of faith in us by His forgiveness.

Discussion Questions

NOTE: The Crossing of the Red Sea is a Biblical narrative that is instructive for understanding the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The Catechism divides its teaching on Baptism into four parts: 1) Its essence—baptism is water combined with God’s Word; 2) Its benefits—it works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe; 3) Its power—the Word of God in and with the water gives to baptism its power to save; 4) Its daily significance—that we die daily to sin in contrition and repentance, and rise up by the power of Christ’s forgiveness to newness of life. The Red Sea was real water combined with God’s Word. It drowned the Egyptian army and brought salvation from death to the Children of Israel. The miracle of salvation at the Red Sea was entirely dependent upon God’s Word. The significance of this miracle for the Children of Israel is that they would return to the Lord each day in repentance and faith to live in the freedom of the salvation that He had given them at the Red Sea. In this way, the miracle of the Red Sea crossing illustrates the essence, benefit, power, and significance of our own baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ.

How did the Lord end Israel’s slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt?

The Lord offered up the Passover Lamb whose blood brought about their redemption from slavery, the Angel of Death passed over, and the Children of Israel were set free to sojourn into the wilderness to the Promised Land.

To what does the blood of the Passover Lamb point?

The blood of the Passover Lamb points to the blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, which was shed for us upon the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and to rescue us from death and the power of the devil.

Why did the Lord not lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land by way of the land of the Philistines?

He did not want them to change their minds and return to Egypt if they faced war along the way.

Whose bones did the children of Israel take with them out of Egypt?

The bones of Joseph to bury them in the cemetery of the patriarchs in the Promised Land.

How did the Lord appear to them and lead them in their wilderness sojourn?

He was continually present with them and led them in a pillar of fire by night and in a pillar of cloud by day.

How is the Lord continually present with us and leading us through the wilderness of this world today?

Through His Word by which He guides, protects, comforts, and grants us every spiritual blessing.

NOTE: *The Lord led them into the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula, to a beach on the Gulf of Acaba on the Red Sea. Cliffs hemmed them in on both sides. The Red Sea lay before them, and Pharaoh’s army pursued them from behind. The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart because of his idolatrous unbelief and used Pharaoh to gain honor before Pharaoh’s army and demonstrate His free gift of salvation to the Children of Israel.*

How did the Children of Israel respond to the pursuit of Pharaoh and his army?

They were afraid and wished they had never left Egypt. They accused Moses and the Lord of harming them by bringing them out of Egypt.

What do their doubts and fears correspond to in us?

Even though we have been redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ, we are often afraid and subject to the weaknesses of sin and unbelief. Our Old Adam often desires to return to the life of slavery to sin and the pleasures of the flesh.

What comforting gospel did Moses proclaim to them?

“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (14:13-14)

What did the Lord instruct Moses to do?

He told Moses to tell the children of Israel to go forward; to lift up his rod and stretch it over the sea so that it was divided, and the children of Israel would pass through the sea on dry ground.

How could water do such great things?

“Certainly not just water, but the Word of God in and with the water did these things...for without God’s Word the water was plain water...but with the Word of God...it was a life-giving water, rich in grace” that rescued the Children of Israel from all her enemies.

Who stood between the Children of Israel and their enemies?

The Lord in a pillar of cloud, which was darkness to the one and gave light to the other.

What did the Lord do to Pharaoh’s army?

He caused the wheels to come off of their chariots so that they drove them with great difficulty.

What did even Pharaoh’s armies confess concerning the Lord?

That they should flee before Him because the LORD was fighting for Israel.

How did the water of the Red Sea collapse upon the Egyptians and return to its full depth?

By the Word of the LORD.

Who is given full credit for saving Israel and for destroying the armies of the Egyptians?

The Lord overthrew the Egyptians and saved Israel through water and the Word.

What did the Lord’s act of salvation through water and the Word of the Lord create in the children of Israel?

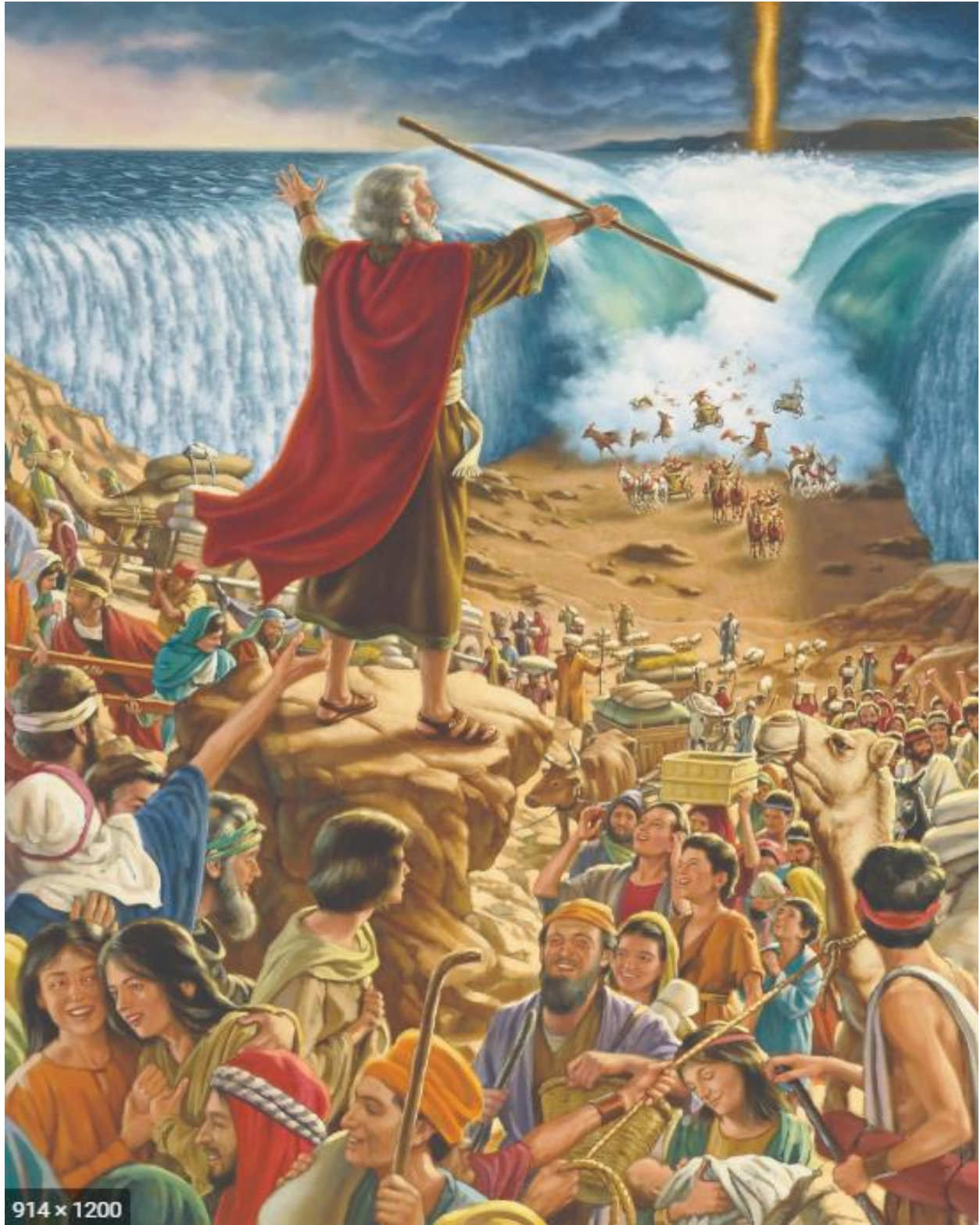
Just as in Holy Baptism, it created faith in the Children of Israel, “so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.”

Meditation on the Bible Story

The Lord’s salvation for the Children of Israel at the Red Sea gives us a wonderful picture of our Baptism. The water was real water, just as it is in our Baptism; and the Word of God was the power of God to save the Children of Israel through water, just as it is in our Baptism. It is certainly not just the water that saves, but the Word of God that is in and with the water that carries with it all the blessings of salvation that the Lord won for us in His death and resurrection. The salvation of Israel at the Red Sea teaches us that we are the children of God by grace alone and that this salvation is entirely a gift of God’s grace. He alone worked salvation for Israel. He alone works salvation for us. The Lord stood between Israel and their enemy, even as the Lord stands between us, covering our sin with His forgiveness, and protecting us from the accusations of the Evil One. Even as we are tempted to return to the bondage and slavery of sin and the appetites of the flesh, so the Children of Israel were tempted to return to Egypt. As the Old Adam had to be drowned and die in them, so the Old Adam must be drowned and die in us through daily contrition and repentance. As Moses spoke forgiveness to the Children of Israel, saying, “Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today,” so the Lord’s forgiveness returns us to the promises of our Baptism and raises us up with Christ to newness of life.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, as you saved the Children of Israel through water and the Word at the Red Sea, so teach us to believe that our Baptism works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe in Your beloved Son; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



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Crossing the Red Sea
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