

Hebrews 11:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land:
which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Analysis

By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. Israel's Red Sea crossing epitomizes salvation by faith through God's power despite impossible circumstances. Trapped between Egyptian army and sea, Israel had no natural escape. Moses declared, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD' (Exodus 14:13). God divided the waters; Israel crossed on dry ground; pursuing Egyptians drowned when waters returned. Faith obeyed God's command to move forward despite impossible barriers.

The contrast between Israel's safe passage and Egypt's destruction illustrates that identical actions produce opposite results depending on faith's presence. Both groups entered the sea; only Israel crossed safely. The Egyptians 'assaying' (peiran labontes, πεῖραν λαβόντες, 'taking trial of' or 'attempting') presumed they could follow, but lacked faith in God's power and promise. Presumption without faith leads to destruction. God's miraculous provision benefits those who trust Him; the same divine power that saves believers judges unbelievers.

Paul writes that Israel's Red Sea crossing prefigures baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2), picturing believers' identification with Christ in death and resurrection. Just as Israel passed through water from bondage to freedom, believers pass through baptism from death to life in Christ. The Red Sea crossing demonstrates salvation as God's supernatural deliverance, impossible for human effort, requiring faith to enter God's provision.

Historical Context

The Red Sea crossing (approximately 1446 BC) occurred shortly after the Exodus, with Pharaoh's army pursuing to recapture fleeing slaves. Traditional and most conservative scholars identify the crossing site in the Gulf of Suez region, though exact location is debated. Egyptian chariot forces represented Bronze Age military superiority; Israel's deliverance was humanly impossible without divine intervention. No Egyptian records acknowledge this defeat, unsurprising given ancient Near Eastern propaganda practices. Archaeological evidence shows Egyptian military presence in Sinai during this period, consistent with biblical narrative. The miracle established God's power over nature and nations, forming Israel's national identity as God's redeemed people.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'Red Sea' impossible barrier in your life requires faith that God can provide passage?
2. How does this passage warn against presumption—attempting what God enables for believers without genuine faith?
3. In what ways does your baptism symbolize passing through judgment waters to new life, like Israel's Red Sea crossing?

Interlinear Text

Πίστει διέβησαν τὴν Ἐρυθρὰν Θάλασσαν ὡς διὰ
By faith they passed through the Red sea as by
G4102 G1224 G3588 G2063 G2281 G5613 G1223

ξηρᾶς ἡς πεῖραν λαβόντες οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι
dry land which assaying to do the Egyptians
G3584 G3739 G3984 G2983 G3588 G124

κατεπόθησαν
were drowned
G2666

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 78:13 (Parallel theme): He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap.

Joshua 2:10 (References Egypt): For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

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