

49 Keys to Dynamic Bible Study  
Footprints of Jesus in the Old Testament: The Seas' Story  
Read Exodus 14, Psalm 77:16-20, and John 6:15-25

The child tasted and smelled the texture of salt in the air, and her clothing felt damp and gritty beside the Red Sea. Holding her fingers in her ears, she tried to block out shrill hostile voices. But no amount of pressure deafened the panic in her father's words to Moses. "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have led us away to die in the wilderness?" he bellowed above the roar of waves. "What have you done to us," another yelled, "by bringing us out of Egypt?" A tall skeletal man pointed a shaking bone of a finger at Moses crying, "Didn't we warn you about this back in Egypt? We pleaded with you to leave us alone so that we might serve the Egyptians." The child pushed her face into her straw-filled doll. She, also, had felt terror when she heard that the Egyptian army was following them.

"Don't be afraid." Moses felt compassion for his people. "You are about to witness Yahweh your God's salvation: you will never again see these Egyptian soldiers." The bulging storm clouds began to loosen their hold on the waters they contained. As Moses pointed his staff over the sea, the thunder and lightning struck out at the evening sky. Even the earth quaked beneath their feet as they watched the sea ripped apart by a whirlwind to reveal a dry path. People, lugging only necessary baggage, crossed between the walls of water in a light that illuminated the darkness. Only after all had crossed, and the morning began to dawn, did they look back and see the Egyptian army crushed beneath crashing waves. Moses had stretched his hand out, again, over the waters. The Israelites, however, were safe on land.

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Like footprints on a snowy terrain, the Red Sea crossing marks the way of Jesus' own sea crossing. The New Testament authors affirm that narratives, as well as specific predictions in the Old Testament, foretell Christ's life, His death, and His resurrection. Moses predicted that a prophet, who was just like himself, would arrive someday and speak solely what God commanded of Him (Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18). In other words, we can recognize the prints of Jesus' feet in the life of Moses. Jesus, according to each of the gospel writers, feeds His people bread from heaven in a wilderness—as Moses had. After Jesus' feeding of the five thousand, John records that the people asserted Jesus was "truly the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). They believed that Jesus was the Prophet like Moses. Furthermore, Jesus, like Moses, would deliver His disciples from a stormy sea (John 6:15-21).

It was in the evening when God saved His people from the Egyptian army, making a path through the Red Sea. The disciples, after leaving Jesus to travel alone up a mountain, also went down to the sea in the evening. In the darkness, a strong wind, like the whirlwind that parted the sea for Moses' people, began to blow. When the disciples had rowed three or four exhausting miles, an overwhelming sight claimed their attention. Agonizing terror, like that of the Israelites, filled their hearts when they saw someone walking on the sea. Establishing who He was by calling out, "I am He," Jesus repeated the very words Moses had used to quell the fears of his people: "Do not be afraid." Then Jesus brought them safely to land, just as Moses had.

The disciples were familiar with the Scriptures that claimed God's exclusive control of the sea. That is why the gospel of Matthew recounts that the disciples "worshipped Jesus" when they returned to land (Matthew 14:33). God's way is "on the sea, and His paths on the mighty waters" writes the psalmist (Ps. 77:19). Not even Moses had the kind of power Jesus had. Though Jesus is a prophet like Moses, the writer of Hebrews 3:3 declares that Jesus "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses...." And like God in Job 9:8, Jesus "treads upon the waves of the sea."