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Where do you live?

*In the land of Egypt, in the wilderness,
or in the Promised Land?*

"(...) for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt."

Exodus 13:9

This might seem a strange question, when you are used to living in the Dutch polder landscape. Are you in Egypt (1), are you on your way to Canaan (2), or are you actually living in the Promised Land (3)?

We are concerned with the spiritual meaning of these things. Egypt represents the world without God. Like Egypt then, this world will be afflicted by God's judgments, the plagues of the end time. However, the Lord Jesus has drawn us out of the present evil world or "age," i.e. the order of the world in the present time (Gal. 1:4). To this end, He died for us and gave Himself for our sins. He is the true Paschal Lamb, and the Red Sea is a picture of His death for us. The cross separates us from this present evil world (Gal. 6:14). The blood of Christ, the true Paschal Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), now secures us from the judgment that will strike the world in the end time. God's Son, Whom we expect from heaven, saves us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10).

In the Red Sea type, we see His death and resurrection for us. Redemption from the power of the world and its prince, Satan, is already a fact for one who belongs to Him; and redemption leads to the song of liberty (Rom. 8; cf. Ex. 15). But then we are not yet in Canaan, the heavenly inheritance promised to us. We are pilgrims on our way to the glory. The wilderness is the land of death, a barren and dry land without water, through which we pass as believers, and depend on help from above, on heavenly resources. The new life feeds on the manna from heaven and the water from the Rock (1 Cor. 10:4).

In the New Testament epistles, this parallel with Israel is evident. The people did not immediately enter the Promised Land in triumph. So there is a difference in the New Testament regarding the degree of the union of the believer with Christ. In Romans and Galatians, we have died with Christ to sin, to the law and to the world. You might say we have been redeemed from Egypt and went across the Red Sea, which speaks of Christ's death for us. But although we sing the song of redemption there (Rom. 8 and Gal. 4), we are still in the wilderness. We are on our way to the glory. God, however, shows us the heavenly plan of His church here, just as Israel at Mount Sinai took note of the regulations regarding God's sanctuary. The model of this was shown to the mediator Moses on the mountain (cf. 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians).

The teaching of Colossians and Ephesians, however, goes much further. In Colossians we have arrived in Gilgal in the land of Canaan, so to speak, where the second generation of the children of Israel were circumcised. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Here the flesh is judged and cast off: "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth" (Col. 3:5). From this starting point we can explore and take possession of the Promised Land, and in this way "seek and set our mind on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1-2).

In Ephesians, however, we have been made alive together with Christ. God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, where all our spiritual blessings are to be found in the presence of our God and Father (Eph. 1 and 2). This is the actual Christian position: made perfect in Christ before God. And this is our final destination as believers. Therefore, Ephesians 2:8 says that salvation is already our portion now. For by grace you *have been saved* through faith.

But in the "wilderness epistles" in the New Testament this is never the case. There we are always on the way to our final heavenly goal, God's salvation in its full extent. These letters describe our practical condition here on earth (apart from Romans and First and Second Corinthians, also Philippians, Hebrews and First Peter). But sometimes it is not possible to get it exactly in an outline. For example, Romans 8 says that according to God's eternal plan, we have been glorified already. "These He also glorified" (v. 30)! God's plan of salvation from eternity to eternity is our assurance, the guarantee that we will truly reach the final destination. God's plans do not fail.

So both the Jordan and the Red Sea are types of Christ's death, but the destination is different. In one case it is the wilderness, in order to walk there in newness of life

(see Rom. 6). And in the other it is the Promised Land, the heavenly places, with all their blessings. The Lord Jesus is not a picture of the Promised Land itself, He is the Fruit of it. And the rain from above and the springs of water down here speak of the activities of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. The fruit of the Spirit must be seen in us, in order for us to be changed into the image of Christ (Gal. 5:22-25). The manna is the food for the wilderness journey. This speaks of Christ as the true bread of life, the bread from heaven (cf. John 6). The produce of the land, the old corn of Canaan – a picture of the glorified Lord in heaven – is the food of the Promised Land (cf. Josh. 5).

