

Wade in the Water – a Brief Intro

Transcript

The song, "Wade in the Water", was a message to the slaves to help them know the safest way to get to the north. Slaves did not read or write, but they were smart and they knew many things. The form of education for them was through story-telling and singing. This song is a good example.

When slaves ran away from their masters in the south part of the US, they faced many dangers. Many slave-catchers with trained dogs were chasing them; the weather could be very harsh; and wild animals and hunters could easily kill them.

The repeated line, "wade in the water", is a clear instruction for the slaves to get into the water so that the dogs belonging to the slave-catchers would lose their smell.

In addition, the line "God's gonna trouble the water" refers to a passage in the Bible. The message in the Bible says that God will send an angle to "trouble", or stir, the waters, and that anyone who gets into the water after that would be healed. This message tells the slaves that even though the water could be dangerous and very scary, God's hand would protect them and give them power and courage to keep going.

The term "Holy Ghost" means God's spirit, not a ghost as we use that word today. Therefore, the phrase, "the Holy Ghost on me" means that God's spirit would be with each slave. This message was very encouraging to the run-away slaves indeed!

Finally, there are many words in this song that show a similarity between the Israelites' escape out of Egypt and the slaves' escape from slavery. This comparison was very encouraging to the slaves because they knew from history that God had protected the Israelites from a terrible situation, and they had faith that God would do the same for them.