

FPFWC Christian Development



God Offers Praise

September 2021

Fall Quarter

September 4, 2021

Lesson #1 –Praise with Music

Scripture Focus – Exodus 15:11-21

ICE BREAKER –

1. *How do Psalms and hymns help believers' express relief, praise, and thanks to the Lord?*

Key Verse: Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?—Exodus 15:11

LESSON BACKGROUND

Long before the exodus of 1447 BC, God had promised Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 13:14–15; 26:3; 28:13). The fulfillment of the promise seemed to be in jeopardy when Jacob and his family moved to Egypt because of a famine in Canaan. Still, God worked through Joseph, a son of Jacob, so that the family could have all it needed during the years of famine (41:53–54).

Over the centuries, the Israelites witnessed significant leadership changes in Egypt, from native Egyptians, to foreign intruders, and then back to the Egyptians again. These intruders are sometimes called Hyksos or “shepherd kings,” but the word more likely just means foreigners who ruled Egypt. This caused the Egyptians to develop an even greater dislike for shepherds (compare Genesis 46:34), something that became very significant in the history of the emerging nation of Israel.

Finally there came a new king to whom Joseph's reputation meant nothing (Exodus 1:8). The original favor Jacob (Israel) and his sons experienced changed into servitude and oppression. Measures were taken to subdue the people and slow their population growth. After the Israelites spent 430 years in Egypt (12:40–41), God was ready to act to fulfill the promises (2:23–25).

It was during this time that Moses was born. It is well-known that he was adopted by a princess of Egypt, but he had to flee Egypt at age 40 after killing an Egyptian (Exodus 2; the age factor for this event is found only in Acts 7:23). Forty years later Moses encountered the Lord at Sinai. God called Moses to lead His enslaved people away from Egypt, and the promise was repeated (Exodus 3:8). God worked through Moses and Aaron (Moses' brother) to bring about nine plagues that devastated Egypt. The tenth plague took the lives of all the firstborn except among the Israelites.

At that point Pharaoh expelled the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 12:31–33). It had been 430 years to the day since Jacob and his family entered Egypt (12:40–41). As God's people left Egypt, they were reminded again that their destination was Canaan (13:5, 11).

Pharaoh, however, changed his mind and decided to bring his labor force back (Exodus 14:5–8). The Egyptians pursued Israel to the edge of the Red Sea. It seemed that the Israelites were blocked by the sea and victory for the Egyptians was assured. God had other plans.

The Israelites crossed the Red Sea safely after the waters parted, but the Egyptians drowned when they tried to follow. The God of Israel was superior to any of the fictitious gods of Pharaoh! The crossing of the Red Sea was pivotal in the history of ancient Israel. The slaves were free, beyond reach of Pharaoh. Moses and the people responded by bursting forth with joyous singing (Exodus 15:1–21).

The printed text for this lesson concerns their song. The first song in the history of this new nation is a song of rejoicing because of the victory that the Lord has obtained for the people. We note in passing that there is a minor difficulty in finding an appropriate designation for this song. It is sometimes called a Song of Moses and Miriam (compare Exodus 15:20–21) or a Song of Moses and Israel (15:1). A Song of Moses already exists in Deuteronomy 32; see 31:30, which introduces the chapter that follows as a “song” of Moses.

LESSON COMMENTARY

Inserted into the narrative of Exodus, the so-called “Song of Moses” is a psalm of praise to commemorate and celebrate the great event of the deliverance of the nation through the sea. It is a poetic retelling of the historical account related in the previous chapter, and it was probably composed much later in Moses’ lifetime and placed here in a late edition of the book (likely by Moses himself). The references to Edom and Moab in v. 15 indicate this, for those nations did not enter the story or experience of the nation until much later (cf. Nm 20:14ff.; 22:1; 26:3). Davis notes that this song “sets the spiritual and theological standard for all subsequent praise” (Davis, *Moses and the Gods*, 183).

This psalm contains four major themes: (1) praise to the Lord for His victory over the Egyptians, 15:1–3, 6–8, 11–13, 21; (2) joy over the defeat of the Egyptians by the Lord, 15:4–5, 9–10; (3) warning to the nations, 15:14–16a, b; and (4) expectation of the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise to the nation, 15:16c, d–17. The psalm speaks of the enemies of the Lord and the attributes of the Lord. Each of these four themes would be relevant for the readers of Exodus as they prepared to enter the land and fight to possess it.

The contents of the song describes the Lord’s enemies, attributes, and deliverance. First the song speaks about the enemies of the Lord. They actually were powerful (15:4) because they had chariots and officers. But in their presumption (15:9a) they were sure they would prevail. Instead the Egyptian soldiers were (and all such enemies will be) utterly defeated (15:5b, 10b). They sank like a stone and were destroyed (15:9b). As a result, God’s enemies should fear (15:14–16a, b) and yet they do not fear and this will result in their own eventual destruction.

Second, the song speaks of God’s attributes. He is “transcendent.” The rhetorical question **Who is like You among the gods, O LORD?** (15:11a) leads to

the obvious answer, “No one is like Him!” He is holy (15:11b). Indeed He is **majestic in holiness**. He is all powerful, including over enemies, over elements, over circumstances, and with that power He fights for His people (15:3, 6, 8a; 15:10a, 12).

He is a “relational” God (15:2) and the psalmist can say with confidence, **The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father’s God, and I will extol Him**. The first person singular pronoun here should be understood as applying to or speaking for the nation as a whole. And yet this is something each individual could say, for God is personally active in the lives of His own (15:13). He is a promise-keeping God (15:17), He is Lord, and He **will reign forever and ever** (v. 18; see Ps 10:16; 29:10; 146:10; Rv 11:15). The final, ultimate victory is yet to come in the last days!

Finally, the song speaks of the Lord’s deliverance of Israel. A summary description of the exodus (in effect the third retelling; 15:19) follows. There is a description of celebration featuring Miriam **the prophetess** (15:20–21; cf. Nm 12:2). Miriam was the first woman ever given this title in the Bible (cf. Deborah, Jdg 4:4; Huldah, 2Ki 22:14; Anna, Lk 2:36; Philip’s daughters, Ac 21:9). Contrary to the culture of that day, women in Israel were accorded high privileges and duties and given great honor for their devotion and service to the Lord.

Together with the song of Moses this scene depicts “the affairs of a community” in which “both men and women take essential parts. When the community joins together for the common songs and celebration there is a strong sense of solidarity. In the leadership of these two [Moses and Miriam] ... mutual complementarity functions as a key model for the unity and efficiency of the entire community” (Hamilton, *Exodus*, 235). It is remarkable to note that she had to be near ninety years old and yet she was dancing and playing **timbrels** (probably small finger cymbals).

LESSON NUGGET – Singing is an important part of the Christian life, for it enables us to praise God and bear witness to others. Our praise should come from the Holy Spirit within (Eph. 5:18-20) and be based on Scripture (Col.3:16). In this way, we worship Him “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24)

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary, The Jeremiah Study Bible and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament