

PRAISE WITH MUSIC

DEVOTIONAL READING: Exodus 15:11-21

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Exodus 14:1–15:21

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Exodus 15:11-21

I. Song, Part 1

Exodus 15:11-19

- ¹¹ Who among the gods
is like you, LORD?
Who is like you—
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders?
- ¹² “You stretch out your right hand,
and the earth swallows your
enemies.
- ¹³ In your unfailing love you will lead
the people you have redeemed.
In your strength you will guide
them
to your holy dwelling.
- ¹⁴ The nations will hear and tremble;
anguish will grip the people of
Philistia.
- ¹⁵ The chiefs of Edom will be terri-
fied,
the leaders of Moab will be
seized with trembling,
the people of Canaan will melt
away;
- ¹⁶ terror and dread will fall on
them.
By the power of your arm
they will be as still as a stone—
until your people pass by, LORD,
until the people you bought pass
by.

¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant
them
on the mountain of your
inheritance—
the place, LORD, you made for your
dwelling,
the sanctuary, Lord, your hands
established.

¹⁸ “The LORD reigns
for ever and ever.”

¹⁹ When Pharaoh's horses, chariots
and horsemen went into the sea, the
LORD brought the waters of the sea back
over them, but the Israelites walked
through the sea on dry ground.

11. These two rhetorical questions point to the uniqueness of God. The Egyptians had hundreds of *gods* and goddesses. Though some of the plagues might have been considered attacks on specific gods, we know that the plagues were a judgment on all the Egyptian gods. So-called gods that were conceived in human imaginations and created by human hands were no match for the *Lord*.

The second question builds on the first, focusing on the Lord's great attributes that set him apart from other “gods.” Emphasis on God's *holiness* begins in Exodus and continues through Revelation. In a way, to call God holy is to call him unique. Because the Lord is holy, he also commands his

people to be holy. Only by being unique in ways similar to God's character can his people be a blessing to the nations.

The final phrases declare that the Lord is to be held in reverence for his praiseworthy deeds and for the *wonders* he has done.

12. The *right hand* of God often refers to his great power to deliver his people. In this case, it celebrates God's victory over the Egyptians on Israel's behalf (Exodus 14:21-30). Given that *the earth swallows* their *enemies*, however, it seems that this verse is also pointing to future events.

In the not-too-distant future, Israel would see Korah and 250 like-minded rebels swallowed up when "the earth opened its mouth" (Numbers 16:32). In that instance, as when the sea swallowed the Egyptians, it was a sign of God's judgment on wickedness and delivering his people. (16:1-31).

13. The verbs in this verse and the next are past tense in the Hebrew, even though the thoughts in view are for the future. Speaking about a future action as though it has already happened makes the certainty of the coming event seem rock solid because it is already being spoken of as accomplished. When speaking about what God will do, those events really are assured of happening.

God's faithfulness to his promises prompted him to redeem *the people* of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 2:24). We often think of redemption in almost purely spiritual terms. Israel's leaving Egypt is one prime physical example of the concept. God spoke of it to Moses as delivering Israel from Egypt (3:8). Our spiritual redemption mirrors this: we are God's people led out of sin and into new life (Colossians 1:9-14).

God was taking the people to the promised land. Canaan was the place God chose as his *holy dwelling* (Genesis 28:16-22; Psalm 78:54). The tabernacle would travel

through the wilderness with the people as a symbol of God's presence (Exodus 29:44-46). When they were settled in the land, God would allow Solomon to build the temple in Jerusalem as a permanent reminder that God chose to dwell with his people (2 Chronicles 6:1-11).

14a. The emphasis changes from how God protects Israel to how others will respond when they *hear* of his power and mighty acts.

14b. The Hebrew word translated *anguish* elsewhere describes the pain of childbirth. In this context, it probably reflects the magnitude and acuteness of the pain of *the people of Philistia*. The land is called Palestine today, located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

15a. The land of *Edom* was south and southeast of the Dead Sea. Its inhabitants traced their lineage to Esau (Genesis 25:30; 36:1). *Moab* lay east of the Dead Sea. Genesis traces their parentage to Lot by his older daughter (19:36-37). As the Israelites were ending their 40 years in the wilderness, they were instructed not to provoke either Edom or Moab because of the inheritance God had given those nations' forefathers (Deuteronomy 2:5, 9).

The Israelites went around Edom, for the Edomites refused to let them pass through the land. This was evidence of the fear of *the leaders* of Edom. The amazement and *trembling* of the rulers of these two nations are emphasized; certainly their reactions to God's mighty works for Israel influenced both nations in their entirety.

15b. Jericho was located in *Canaan* and is a prime example of the consuming terror *the people* felt. Forty years after singing this song (Numbers 14:34), Joshua sent two spies to the city of Jericho (Joshua 2:1). Rahab, a Canaanite woman, reported that the people of the land were terrified of Israel. One reason that she gave was that they had heard about Israel's crossing of the Red Sea.

16. Given that Moses and the Israelites had very recently escaped Egypt into an uncertain nomadic existence, it is not surprising that *terror and dread* of them did not spread immediately among the hostile nations. Nomads were not necessarily cause for concern, though a large group was worth keeping track of. Not even the Israelites themselves were convinced they would survive in their new unsettled existence. But 40 years later, when Israel camped on the east side of the Jordan, opposite Jericho, the tides turned toward fear (Deuteronomy 2:25; 3:4).

Once again a metaphor, this time regarding God's *arm*, celebrates *the power* of the Lord in working on behalf of his chosen people. Though the other nations would resist the Lord, their efforts would be as effective as if they stood *as still as a stone* (1 Samuel 25:37). This state of affairs would last until the Lord had established in the land his *people*, whom he had *bought* (Exodus 15:13). This is consecration language, most recently seen in God's declaration that the firstborn of animals and humans were his (with provisions for redeeming them; Exodus 13:11-15).

17. Once again Moses spoke of God's settling the people in their promised land, this time referring specifically to *the mountain Zion* (Psalm 2:6; Daniel 9:16). *The sanctuary* refers specifically to the future temple, which would be built on Zion (2 Chronicles 5:2-7).

18. Some people challenged the Lord's reign by challenging his chosen leader Moses (1 Samuel 8:6-9). As a result, some were swallowed by the earth; others were consumed with fire; and 14,700 died in a plague. In another incident many died after being bitten by serpents.

19. *Chariots* had been introduced into Egypt as instruments of war. Previously, chariots were used for ceremonial purposes. The Egyptians quickly discovered

their military usefulness and added many chariots to their armies.

The Egyptians lost 600 chariots as a result (Exodus 14:7, 28). Years before, the Egyptians had captured hundreds of chariots from Canaanite forces at the Battle of Megiddo. Neither the destroyed chariots nor their drivers were easy to replace. We also note the 900 iron chariots mentioned in Judges 4:3, which form the power by which the Canaanites oppress the Israelites roughly two centuries later.

The verse before us summarizes the song of Exodus 15. Both the Egyptians and *the Israelites* experienced the depths of *the sea*. For God's people, the depths were just *dry ground*. But those same depths became the final resting place for the Egyptians, who had been their taskmasters.

II. Song, Part 2

Exodus 15:20-21

²⁰ **Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing.** ²¹ **Miriam sang to them:**

**"Sing to the LORD,
for he is highly exalted.
Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea."**

20. *Miriam* and both of her siblings are designated as prophets (see Exodus 7:1; Deuteronomy 18:15; 34:10; compare Micah 6:4). She is one of several women in the Bible who are designated as such (Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Nehemiah 6:14; Isaiah 8:3; Luke 2:36).

Miriam and all the women use their *timbrels* and rhythmic dance to provide accompaniment to the song of Moses.

21. The refrain that *Miriam* and the women *sang* is similar to how the song began. Their words are a reminder on how the most powerful nation in the world at that time was no match for God.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

PRAISE WITH MUSIC

Into the Lesson

Consider the top ten songs of the week. What are the songs praising or celebrating?

With today's lesson we begin a four-lesson study on the theme of worshipful praise. The contrast we see between the praise in popular music and the examples of praise in our lessons may prove interesting!

Into the Word

Read Exodus 15:11-21. Take note of details that are new or surprising to you. List events mentioned in the text that led the Israelites to praise God. Include one or more verse references for each item in their list. Use the two columns labeled *Today* for the **Into Life** section.

Attributes of God	Today	Actions of God	Today

Into Life

Complete the *Today* columns of the above chart.

List Christian worship songs that include the attributes of God found in today's text.

List great acts of God that have inspired or could inspire songs of praise.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God always wins.