

# Exodus 13-15

Study Outline

## Launching question

Relate stories that show how 'competitive' you all are (or aren't!).  
What is 'competitiveness'?  
When is it a good thing / a bad thing to rejoice in 'beating' someone else?

## The story so far ...

From 13:8 and 13:14ff, what are Israel never to forget?

## Read 14:1-4

What is God's goal in the events that will follow? how will he achieve this?

## Read 14:5-31

Israel last 'cried out' in 2:23. What is similar/different this time ... both in terms of what they want, and in what God says/does?  
What does Moses urge Israel to do (13-14)? why?  
What is 'the salvation of the Lord' (13) from these chapters?  
How does God 'gain glory'?

What do the Egyptians realise for the first time in 25? (cf 17-18)  
What do the Israelites realise in 30-31? (cf 10, 13-14)  
But what do 14:11, 14:31 and 15:22ff tell you about human nature?

## Read 15:1-18

According to this song itself, why is it being sung?  
What is God called? how is this image worked out in the rest of the song?  
What is God's intention for his people, now that he's redeemed them?  
How does this poem talk about God in terms of ...  
(a) how he treats his people? (*maybe cf God's care in 13:17-22*)  
(b) how he treats those who oppose his purposes?

## Thinking it through

We have seen that God saves by defeating his enemies.  
Why is it important that he does?  
Read Colossians 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 15:24-27.  
How is God's victory at the cross similar to the one at the Red Sea?

In what ways is it a good thing for Christians to rejoice in God's victory?  
God is concerned that Israel don't forget this victory: how should we as Christians 'remember' (if we're not going to celebrate the Passover etc)?

Think of some of the consequences for us of 14:13-14 – 'Remembering God mightily defeating his enemies will help me as a Christian because ...'?

How have you glimpsed more of God's glory tonight? how will it affect you?

# Exodus 13-15

Study 6

T H E G O D W H O T R I U M P H S

## Summary

*Exodus* is the story of God showing us what he is like: he is the God who rescues his people. He does this in faithfulness to his promises, for his own glory, and out of sheer mercy and kindness to those he has chosen. We should expect to know our God better through reading this book.

## The story so far

Exodus 13-15 forms the climax of the story of God's rescue of Israel from Egypt. This rescue is a response to the people's cries for help (2:23). But even more, this rescue is driven by God's faithfulness to his promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3, 7). And these promises are indeed promises of salvation, for they occur as God's response to the tragedy of Genesis 3-11. So Exodus is a mini-picture of God doing for Israel what he promises for all: he will rescue the world from his judgment, and instead bring blessing.

God has rescued 'with great acts of judgment' (6:6; 7:4; 12:12). Pharaoh has been humbled as God's mighty outstretched hand has struck Egypt with plague after plague, culminating in the devastating death of every first-born (cf 4:22-23). Israel herself has been spared, but the terribleness of these events has taught her that it is only through the LORD's grace and power that she has been saved. The sacrifice of a lamb without defect will now forever remind Israel that blood must be shed for there to be salvation.

## Theme Sentence

God saves his people by mightily defeating all his enemies.

## Ideas for application

- God is continuing to reveal himself, and in particular here as 'a man of war' who completely destroys his enemies. God doesn't do this to ask for our permission or approval, but so that we know him as he truly is: does our image of God happily embrace his 'strong arm' tactics?
- God alone is the source of our salvation: we watch him achieve it for us, contributing nothing to it, for 'he has become our salvation' (15:2). This should give us great confidence about the security of salvation.
- it is obviously very important to God that we remember the rescue he achieves for us by his mighty arm (cf all the ceremonies so that Israel remembers, and passes on this knowledge to their children). What am I doing specifically to 'remember' God's victorious triumph as he saves me? and what does it actually mean to 'remember'?

# Commentary

13:1-16 God gives to Israel two ways to 'remember this day' (3):

- (a) eating unleavened bread for seven days at Passover;
  - (b) devoting every first-born male to the Lord (cf 4:22-23).
- Note the similarity in phrasing about these two things (cf 9, 16). But note especially what it is that these are both to remind them about: that the Lord brought them out of Egypt 'by a strong arm' (3, 9, 14, 16). This new thing to remember is the theme of Ex 13-15.

It seems in Exodus as if this act of subsequent remembering is almost as important as the rescue itself; ever since 11:1, details of the night are described immediately followed by instructions never to forget them. Remembering these events is the way to know God. Sadly 14:10-12 will show just how quickly they manage to forget.

13:13 suggests similarities to the Passover lamb. Yet again, death is inevitable unless an animal is sacrificed as a substitute.

13:17-22 God's care is clear in the cloud (to lead) and the fire (to light) which together allow 'full-time' travel (21b). But his care is also just as clear in the roundabout route God chooses (17-18), to protect Israel from their own fickle hearts.

The significance of Joseph's bones is in Gen 50:22-26, where he's confident that God would keep his promises and 'bring you up out'. Heb 11:22 says that this incident in Joseph's life shows his faith.

14:1-4 Everything that happens in this story follows God's plan (here by hardening Pharaoh's heart [8] to entrap him) to fulfil God's purpose.

Just as in 33:7-23, where a discussion about God's presence leads to Moses' request to see God's glory, so here God's presence with his people on the journey (in the pillars) leads to statements about God getting 'glory' for himself. In both places, God's name or character is revealed through what he has done, and that is the glory of God. All Egypt (14:4 cf 7:5), all Israel (6:6-7), all the world (9:16) always (3:15) will know him as God who saves mightily.

14:6-9 Pharaoh also brings out his army to wage war: the sides line up.

14:10-14 The Israelites last 'cried' to the Lord in 2:23. But their lack of trust here jars alongside the comprehensive might of God: how daft to prefer a return to the very misery from which he's saving them!

14:15-29 is the climactic moment of the story: the power of God is plainly conveyed via the power of the story. The great difference between this deliverance and the Passover is that this time Israel will 'see' it (NB repeated 'see' in 13): God will show his mighty arm in battle.

God miraculously makes the Red Sea dry land for Israel to cross over, but then sweeps the Egyptians away with the returning

waters. (Note in 21 that even nature serves his purpose, and the language of dividing land from sea deliberately echoes creation language in Gen 1). Deliverance comes from the Lord and him alone (13-14). He is without equal: no-one can stand before him.

14:25 This is the first time Egypt uses the Lord's name. As predicted, now, after his salvation of his people, they do know him (17-18).

14:30-31 Cf 13-14. In both places, the theme is salvation. The 'fear' of 10 is changed into the 'fear' of 31, now directed towards the one with 'great power'. Lack of faith is transformed into right fear and faith. Israel have been spectators as the Lord has fought for them (14).

15:1-18 describes Israel's spontaneous and exuberant praise, as well as explaining to us the theology of what has happened.

In the first half of the song (1-12), and using one of the most striking descriptions of God in the OT, the Lord is a **warrior-saviour** engaged in a holy war, fighting for his people and throwing over his enemies. This also sounds very like some contemporary creation myths (where the gods make the world through combat), suggesting that God saving his people is like the start of the new world after Gen 3-11 spoiled it.

In the second half (13-18), the Lord is the **shepherd-leader**. Rather than passing through waters to leave Egypt, Israel now passes through people (listed in a geographical order that follows the Exodus route) to enter the Promised Land. The 'mountain' (17) is viewed as the centre of world revelation, so the idea is that in Israel herself (and her story) is the place where God is known.

The reality of their journey was of course disobedience and struggle (as we immediately see in 15:22-27), but the emphasis here is how very easy it was for God to achieve his purpose.

At its simplest, this song is about *what God has done* (1-12) as a basis for certainty of *what God will do* (13-18). Because of God's triumphant victory, the Israelites can sing with confidence about their future. This is faith. We've seen it develop in the people (4:31; 5:21-23; 6:9; 12:28, 50-51; 14:10-12, 13-14, 31), so that now they truly do know the Lord (6:7). A high point of the story.

Christians share in the joy of this victory. At the cross, God put the rulers and authorities of evil to 'open shame' (cf Col 2:15). One day, all Christ's enemies will be a footstall for his feet (1 Cor 15:24-27). And victory at the Red Sea points us to our final salvation on the Day of Judgment (cf Isaiah 51:9-11; Rev 15:1-4).

15:22-27 Immediately a low point: they 'grumble'. This word has great Bible significance (cf 16:2; 17:3; 1 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:14) for grumbling against God's provision is the start of rebellion. In the context of 14:11, 31, we see our easily hard-hearted human nature.