

LESSON 1

SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

UNIT I. GOD'S PEOPLE OFFER PRAISE

CELEBRATING WITH SONG

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 105:1-2, 37-45

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Exodus 14:1–15:21

PRINT PASSAGE: Exodus 15:11-21

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, KJV)

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“Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?” (Exodus 15:11, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explore why and how Moses and Miriam praised God.
- Reflect on the actions of God that are celebrated through music, dance, and words.
- Celebrate God's faithfulness with joy.

Key Terms

Earth (verse 12)—Hebrew: *erets* (eh'-rets): land; whole earth.

Glorious (verse 11)—Hebrew: *adar* (aw-dar'): wide; great; “majestic” (NIV).

Habitation (verse 13)—Hebrew: *naveh* (naw-veh'): abode of shepherd or flocks; “dwelling” (NIV).

Hear (verse 14)—Hebrew: *shama* (shaw-mah'): to listen attentively.

Inheritance (verse 17)—Hebrew: *nachalah* (nakh-al-aw'): possession; property; inheritance.

Mercy (verse 13)—Hebrew: *checed* (kheh'-sed): favor; kindness toward humanity; “unfailing love” (NIV).

Redeemed (verse 13)—Hebrew: *gaal* (gaw-al'): rescued; bought back; acted as kinsman.

INTRODUCTION

Songs have been a natural part of human culture since ancient times. People connect memories and feelings to songs. Songs capture the moments and movements of history. Songs can be a rallying call, a battle cry, a lover's croon, or simply a birthday celebration. Some songs are written and sung for a specific mood or occasion, like Pharrell Williams's “Happy” or Stevie Wonder's rendition of “Happy Birthday.” Within the genre of sacred music, there is an incredibly wide range of songs for every spiritual theme, prayer, praise, lament, biblical doctrine, divine attribute, or sentiment of the believer's heart. The gift of song enriches the experience of public and private worship, allowing those who trust in the Lord to add melodic beauty to the words they utter in God's presence. When we encounter new grace, new mercy, new wonders from God's hand, we should sing a song to Him. It can be a new song or a song from the past which may seem new as it rises from our hearts. Throughout our Christian journey, we should carry within our spirits a song to affirm our trust in, devotion to, and reference for our great God.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Yahweh's action in freeing Israel from Egypt is a common and significant theme in Old Testament songs. You can see Psalms 78:12-16, 51-55; 135:8-9; 136:10-15; and many others for additional connections to the theme. This song and two other Bible songs are referred to as "the Song of Moses" (see Deuteronomy 32; Revelation 15:3-4). The common theme in all of the songs is that of Yahweh's acts to free His people and judge their enemies. While Israel praised God as warrior, judge, and plague giver when leaving Egypt, Yahweh quickly taught them that "I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). The healing and delivering of the Lord were worthy to be praised then and still stand as a call to praise God today. The children of Israel moved from calling on the Lord for salvation and relief, to witnessing His hand of deliverance, to rejoicing in the Lord's goodness, mercy, and grace.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

THE DEEDS OF GOD (EXODUS 15:11-13)

KJV

11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, *glorious* in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the *earth* swallowed them.

13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast *redeemed*: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy *habitation*.

NIV

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*."

The "Song of Moses," our lesson for today, begins at Exodus 15:1. It is an inspired song that celebrates Israel's victory over Egypt by God's mighty hand. The song was first sung in the place of their deliverance and is believed to be the oldest recorded song in Hebrew and, possibly, world history. The song begins with the question "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?" (**verse 11a**). In addition to God's dealing with Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, the gods of Egypt had been put to shame by the Lord (see Exodus 7-11). The question continues by asking who is like the Lord in His glorious holiness, fearful praises, and wondrous works (**verse 11b**). The questions regarding God's majestic holiness, awesome glory, and wondrous works read like exclamatory statements celebrating God's attributes. The song extols the Lord's victory, noting that with His stretched-out right hand, He has swallowed up His enemies (**verse 12**). The singer rejoices in God's grace and mercy because God not only redeemed His people, but also led them out by His mercy (**verse 13a**). The Lord's desire is to redeem His creation back to Himself. The chorus points to the ultimate goal of God's deeds—to guide His people by His strength to His holy habitation or dwelling (**verse 13b**). God's desire for His people was to dwell in peace in the Promised Land, a holy habitation. This is still God's desire—to guide us to heaven, His holy habitation. His desire for us gives us good reason to rejoice.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

When you witness the deeds of God, how do you react? How should you react? Do the two match?

THE DREADING OF OUR GOD (EXODUS 15:14-16)

KJV

14 The people shall *hear*, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

NIV

14 “The nations will *hear* and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia.

15 “The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, 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.”

Moses shifts the last sections of the song to remind the people of God’s powerful presence. Unlike any other god, He shall be respected. The power of this song is that it reminded Israel of God’s might and the dread others would have when they heard of the Lord. The song joyfully celebrates how the nations would hear of the Lord’s mighty works and tremble in anguish (**verse 14**). Fear would grip Edom, Moab, and Canaan until they were terrified, trembling, and melting away (**verse 15**) under the mighty hand of God as fearful dread came upon them (**verse 16a**). The dread of the Lord is so powerful that the inhabitants of the land would appear as stone statues as the Lord delivered His people safely (**verse 16b**). It is important to not miss the statement at the end of **verse 16** describing Israel as those whom the Lord has purchased. Consider the redemptive phrase of verse 13, and the prophetic weight of the song’s message. The Lord did deliver Israel out of Egypt, pouring out His wrath through plagues and an ultimate defeat at the Red Sea. Likewise, through Jesus’ sacrifice at Calvary, God redeemed His people once and for all, by the blood of the Lamb. Our chief enemy, Satan, dreads the work of God in the hearts of His people.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What impact does the knowledge that God’s enemies fear Him have on those who trust God? Do you think it encourages humility or arrogance? Support and explain your answer.

THE DWELLING OF OUR GOD (EXODUS 15:17-21)

KJV

17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine *inheritance*, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

NIV

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.

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.”

The closing sections of the “Song of Moses” tell of God’s bringing His people in and planting them on the mountain of their inheritance (**verse 17**). This is no ordinary planting—the mountain symbolizes a nation’s being exalted above others and protected. This is not a place that Israel had created—God Himself made it for them as a place in which they could dwell in His presence (**verse 17**). This dwelling place is called a “Sanctuary” made by the Lord’s hands (**verse 17**). Note that it is the entire land (rather than a building made by human hands) that is referred to as a sanctuary. It is the dwelling place of God—His own sanctuary, established and inhabited by Him. It is the place where the Lord reigns (**verse 18**). The song closes in **verse 19** with a reminder of what God did for Israel at the Red Sea. The Bible then notes that Miriam (who is sister to brothers Aaron and Moses) took up a tambourine—as she was joined by other women—to dance and praise God with singing (**verse 20**). The verses record what we know as the African tradition of call-and-response or antiphonal singing—as Miriam recites back the Lord’s triumphant victory over His enemy (**verse 21**). The crowd or congregation joins in as they worship (together) the Lord, who dwells with them.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you believe that God dwells wherever His saints dwell, then do you engage in worship experiences with others outside the physical church sanctuary? Why or why not?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

This unit deals with God’s people’s offering praise. How and when we celebrate God is important to Him and should be important to us. Our devotion to God should not be confined to one day of the week. We should acknowledge God’s goodness and deliverance in our lives every day. As God proves Himself mighty on our behalf, we should praise Him. Because God is constantly blessing us with His goodness and might, we should praise Him throughout the day. Whether with song, poetry, dance, or instruments, we must give our best worship to the One who loves us eternally.

YOUR LIFE

This week, reflect on the ways that and times when you are most inclined to praise God. Be more intentional about praising God openly. Whenever and wherever you praise Him, be sincere, be intentional, be focused.

YOUR WORLD!

Look for opportunities to share something God has done for you. Share with a stranger and with some- one you know. With the stranger, ease into the conversation by discussing common things first. For example, when shopping, you can use the quality of items you are considering for purchase as an ice breaker.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Father, You have delivered us from evil. Through every danger You have been with us, protecting and providing for us. For every blessing You have given so graciously, we thank You. By Your grace and mercy, please continue to bless us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "How do you celebrate with enthusiasm?"

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

DAVID DANCES BEFORE THE ARK

(September 6-12, 2021)

MONDAY, September 6: "David Prepares to Transport the Ark" (2 Samuel 6:1-5)

TUESDAY, September 7: "The Holiness of the Sanctuary" (Hebrews 9:1-7)

WEDNESDAY, September 8: "Uzzah Disregards the Ark's Holiness" (2 Samuel 6:6-11)

THURSDAY, September 9: "The House of the Lord!" (Psalm 122)

FRIDAY, September 10: "Go to God's Dwelling Place" (Psalm 132:1-12)

SATURDAY, September 11: "The Ark in the Heavenly Temple" (Revelation 11:15-19)

SUNDAY, September 12: "David Dances before the Ark" (2 Samuel 6:12-19)