

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)

.....

“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, the participants 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: *cheched* (kheh’-sed): favor; kindness toward humanity; “unfailing love” (NIV).

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

PREPARING THE LESSON

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher’s Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week’s student assignments (“Your Life” and Your World!”).
- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

People compose poems and songs for different celebrations. How can songs and poems express thankfulness and rejoicing in victory? After their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, Moses and Miriam composed songs and led the people in praising God.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

Most people are familiar with songs that celebrate important events. These songs of celebration include birthday songs, wedding songs, and songs that highlight historical events and movements. Songs and poetry express emotions that many writing styles are unable to convey. Additionally, many songs capture the spirit of the times and chronicle national sentiment and major historical events as they unfold. The lessons from sacred songs lead believers into worship and help them to

remain focused on their God-ordained mission and purpose, even in adversity. Finally, some sacred songs recount and celebrate God's works and strengthen believers' confidence that justice will prevail over injustice.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

God's intervention to deliver Israel from Egypt is a common and significant theme in Old Testament songs (see Psalms 78:12-16, 51-55; 135:8-9; 136:10-15; and many others). Today's lesson focuses on (and two other Bible songs are referred to as) "the Song of Moses," as recorded in Exodus 15. The common theme in all the songs is that of Yahweh's acts to free His people and judge their enemies. While Israel praised God as warrior, judge, and deliverer when leaving Egypt, God also taught them that "I am the Lord, who heals you" (Exodus 15:26, NIV). In every generation—past, present, and future—God shall forever remain remarkably worthy of praise for His healing power, and for His willingness to come to the aid of His people in any crisis.

The perfect-tense (in Hebrew) verbs in verses 13-14 have been translated to convey a prophetic declaration or a completed action (a typical rendering of the Hebrew perfect tense). Adopting the former course are NRSV, NASB, KJV, and NKJV; adopting the latter course are NIV, NLT, and CSB. With reference to Exodus 15:11, the Bible ascribes holiness to God in two senses: ontologically (separate from creation) and ethically (separate from sin). The KJV presents God as separate from creation in every dimension of His knowledge, being, and power. Many church doctrinal statements quote portions of Exodus 15:11 to reference the nature of God. The powerful, timeless words often lead believers into heartfelt praise for the great I AM.

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the questions below.)

1. Recall and share the last celebration event you attended (in person, or virtually).
2. What are your favorite celebration songs (one secular and one spiritual)?
3. What do you typically do to celebrate your accomplishments? How do you prefer to celebrate milestones and good news?

INSIGHTS

Christians strengthen their faith by recalling ways that God has acted and interacted in our lives in the past. Many such recollections incorporate spiritual songs that speak of God's deliverance from both physical and spiritual threats. Confidence in Christ inspires the singing of beautiful songs that come from the hearts of believers across the world and reminds Christians of their unifying bond in Christ Jesus.

EXPLORATION

Christians sing songs that praise and worship God for who He is and what He does. Mature Christians grow to the point of being mindful to also praise God for what He has done in the lives of others. The celebration of God's character and mighty acts through sacred music allows believers, individually and collectively, to display their faith in the reality of God's power to overcome all evil forces.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

COMMENTARY ON 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,” Exodus 15:1-21, is deemed as one of the finest praise hymns in biblical poetry. The song looks back at Israel’s triumph over Pharaoh at the Red Sea and points forward through time to the final redemptive song of Revelation 15:3-4. This week’s lesson focuses on the third stanza of the song. The first stanza, verses 1-5, speaks of God’s inclination to war for His people. The second stanza, verses 6-10, celebrates how God overthrew the enemy who rose up against Him. The third stanza, in African tradition, asks a question without expectation for an answer: “Who is like our God?” (see verse 11). Just as Moses sings the question, which is more like an exclamatory statement (a statement of excitement), he sings the answer—showing and celebrating God’s deeds. God removed the enemy (verse 12), redeemed His people by grace (verse 13a), and refreshed and restored them in a holy habitation with Him (verse 13b). Even if Egypt and other nations did not know who God is, Moses and the rest of Israel stood ready to proclaim their knowledge of and love for God. The fearful or terrible praise of verse 11 refers to the awe-inspiring majesty of God. God’s mighty deeds as revealed through His mercy are like those of a shepherd leading his flock to the fold. God leads His people to His habitation, the Promised Land, a place of sweet rest available to all who trust in Him.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Questions:**

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

- **Young Adult Question:**

When God brings you through a tough situation, do you give Him the glory, or do you take personal credit for God’s goodness?

COMMENTARY ON 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 moves from focusing on the holy habitation to briefly mentioning the people of Philistia. It is odd that the present-day name of the Holy Land is derived from the name of one of Israel’s most bitter enemies. Stanzas 4 and 5 indicate that God’s name and His mighty acts were known and spoken of throughout the region. Surrounding nations feared and dreaded Israel’s God when they heard the story of the miracle at the Red Sea (see Joshua 2:9-10; 5:1). Forty years later, the people of Canaan still spoke of how God defeated the army of Israel. In the wilderness, Israel only had to fight once—their opponent was a group of vagrant Amalekites, believed to have been nomads during those times. Fear of God gripped the Canaanites, the Edomites (see Deuteronomy 32:4), and the Moabites (see Numbers 22:3). The disposition of those who feared God was actually an affirmation of God’s favor of God upon His people. As redemption is a central theme for this song, we must not miss the price paid for our redemption. Enemies are literally slaughtered for the safety and sustainability of God’s people. He did it all for us. Knowing the enemy fears and dreads God because of His might, how can we not have complete reverence for our God?

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Questions:**

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.

- **Young Adult Questions:**

Have you ever come out of a situation in such a way that only God could have orchestrated it? What song did it put on your heart?

COMMENTARY ON 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 “sanctuary” reference in verse 17 is Israel’s goal or destination—one that the people had not yet attained. However, in the understanding that God is ever present (see Zephaniah 3:17; Hebrews 13:5-6), we should also understand that God’s sanctuary is any place where the people of God are gathered in His name.

Although Miriam was a biological sister to both Moses and Aaron, she is spiritually ranked with Aaron rather than with Moses. That is a likely explanation for the omission of Moses’ name as her brother. Unlike Moses, who was raised in Pharaoh’s palace, Miriam was raised as a slave in the same household with Aaron, under the thumb of Egyptian slave rule. To that point, she had lived her entire life as a slave and would have been especially overjoyed with the victory over Egypt at the Red Sea. Her dance reflected the religious tradition of the Ancient East and set the stage for the shouting and praise dancing still practiced in many African-American church traditions. An additional African tradition observed in the passage is that they “answered” (verse 21). They sang the verses antiphonally (singing/citing short verses alternately between groups or a leader and group also known as “call and response”). Verses 20-21, the final verses of the hymn, are attributed to Miriam.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book’s related biblical exposition section.)

• Adult Questions:

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

• Young Adult Question:

If you were asked to write a song to the Lord, what would it be? Would it lament your woes or emphasize your gratitude?

LIFE APPLICATION

• Refer to Adult Book

(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)

—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.

(See student lesson’s “Your World!” section.)

—Look for opportunities to share something God has done for you. Share with a stranger and with someone 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.

• Refer to Young Adult Book

(See student lesson’s “Your Life” section.)

—When you were younger, your parents were the center of your life. During your teen years, your peers became the center of your life. As you move through the years of young adulthood, God should have the more prominent place at the center of your life.

(See student lesson’s “Your World!” section.)

—As you navigate through life, you should always have a song of praise that moves from the

depths of your heart to the words of your lips to reach God and others. Someone needs to hear your song. Therefore, make a joyful noise to the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, September 12, 2021, is "Celebrating with Enthusiasm." The Devotional Reading text is Ecclesiastes 3:1-9, the Background Scripture text is 2 Samuel 6, and the Printed Text is 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 14-19.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You continue to deliver us from evil. You have seen us through many seen and unseen dangers. We thank You for these and so many other blessings. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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)