EXODUS 13-15: “Sing to the Lord for He Has Triumphed Gloriously”

This morning we’re going to be looking at a familiar Bible story, the parting of the Red Sea. Whenever I teach the Bible I like to look at the big picture, to step back and view the passage from a broader perspective, in context with the overall story of the Bible. To do that with this story we need to go back to the time of Abraham *[picture].* Just a brief overview of what God promised to him and to his descendants. In Genesis Chapter 12 God called Abraham. At that time he was still known as Abram and he was living in Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia. God told Abram… READ Genesis 12:1-3 *[slides].* And Abram obeyed. He did as the Lord had told him. *[slide showing cart]* God led him to the land of Canaan. Of course when he got there with his family the land was already occupied. But God told Abram… READ Genesis 12:7 *[slide]*. Later, after Abram and Lot had split up and gone their separate ways God once again came to Abram and said… READ Genesis 13:14-17 *[slide].*

In Genesis Ch 15 God revisited Abram and He reaffirmed His promise to make Abram a great nation. Abram reminded the Lord that he was still childless and wondered if this great nation that God had promised would come thru his servant Eliezer. But God said to Abram, “This man shall not be your heir… READ Genesis 15:4 *[slide].* Then God brought Abram outside and said… READ Genesis 15:5 *[slide].* And then you have that great statement of faith… READ Genesis 15:6 *[slide].* And in the very next verse God reminds Abram of what He had previously promised. He said, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” (Gen 15:7) Then God made a covenant with Abram, a promise that what He said He would do, He would fulfill. In Ch 17 we have the Abrahamic covenant, given in conjunction with the rite of circumcision. God told Abram… READ Genesis 17:5-8 *[slides].*

But all this was not going to happen during Abram’s lifetime. God told Abram that his offspring would be sojourners in a land that was not theirs (which turned out to be Egypt) and they would be servants there, and they would be afflicted for 400 years. But then God said that He would then bring judgment on the nation that they serve (Egypt), and afterward they would come out with great possessions. (15:13-14) And this part of God’s promise to Abram was fulfilled in last week’s lesson when the people of Israel, Abram’s descendants, now some 2 million strong, having been afflicted by the Egyptians for 400 years, did in fact come out of Egypt with many possessions. The scripture says that “they plundered the Egyptians.”

So now that you have the big picture we’ll pick up the narrative in Exodus Ch 13. The people of Israel have finally been released from their bondage. There’s great rejoicing and excitement fills the air during their exodus from Egypt. God’s covenant people are finally free! But as miraculous and amazing as that is, it’s only a part of what God has promised to do for His people. Remember what God had told the people thru His servant Moses? “I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey.” And so here they are, heading back home, to the Promised Land, to the place which the Lord God had promised to Abram and later affirmed to Isaac and Jacob and the people in Egypt. But it’s not going to be an easy journey. And it’s going to be slow-going because you have 2 million people which includes the elderly, some pregnant women and small children.

READ Exodus 13:17-22 *[refer to map showing route]*

God personally leads the way. No roadmap or compass required, God is their divine guide. Remembering back to Abram, God desires to have a personal relationship with His covenant people and to bless them. He wants them to love Him and to trust Him. He has chosen this nation for a purpose, which He told Abram back in Genesis 12. God has chosen the nation of Israel ultimately to “exemplify divine blessing” to the world.

So God uses the time of the people’s journey from Egypt to Canaan to teach them to rely on Him – completely – for everything. These people are in dire need of spiritual training. Remember, they’ve been governed by a pagan foreign power for centuries now. No doubt they’ve been influenced to some degree by the polytheistic culture of Egypt. In fact, Exodus 12:38 points out that there is “a mixed multitude also that [goes] up with them” when they leave. So the departing Israelites are accompanied by other Semitic people, other races, perhaps some native Egyptians. The people of Israel and those who are with them have a lot to learn about what is required if they are going to be an independent thriving nation controlled by God and exemplifying His divine blessing. Much to learn!

Through Moses, God will provide this group of people with their specific instructions. He will provide for their physical needs and He will equip them to fight their enemies. All of the experiences that God is going to put them through on this journey are for a reason. They are intended to teach the people to trust God and, as we’ll see, it will certainly test their faith in Him.

This is a good time to bring this up… when we did our Genesis study almost 2 years ago now I asked the question, “What do you need to build a nation?” People, land, leadership, laws, army *[explain how each one is provided by God]* By the time they arrive in Canaan they will have everything they need to be the great nation God intends them to be.

So the people are leaving Egypt headed east toward the land God has promised to give them. But it isn’t long until the first test comes.

READ Exodus 14:1-4

God tells Moses exactly what’s going to happen. Pharaoh is going to have a change of heart about releasing the people (imagine that) and he and his army will take up pursuit. But in the end, God says, “I will get the glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.” Just like what happened back in Egypt with those 10 plagues. And as we read on it happens exactly as God said. Here comes Pharaoh in hot pursuit with his chariots and horsemen. Meanwhile God has the Israelites encamp on the bank of the Red Sea.

READ Exodus 14:10-12

The people see Pharaoh’s army coming. They see they’re trapped by the Red Sea. And they panic. They think that they’re going to die. They’re afraid of the Egyptian army. They turn on Moses. They do NOT trust God. In short, they fail their very first test! OK, maybe this is to be expected. It certainly tells you where they are spiritually. Faithlessness is always focused on the circumstances rather than on the One who is faithful.

So Moses being the spiritual leader and privy to what God’s plans are regarding Pharaoh and his army addresses the people…

READ Exodus 14:13-14

The Lord God places a dark cloud between the Egyptian army and the people of Israel. This keeps the Egyptians from getting any closer. Following God’s instructions, it says in verse 21…

READ Exodus 14:21-22

Just before sunrise the dark cloud is lifted and Pharaoh’s army chases the people into the middle of the sea. By this time the people have reached the other side. Moses again follows God’s instruction and he stretches out his hand toward the sea and it returns to its normal state.

READ Exodus 14:28-31

Comment on what I see – Christians who are negative and are deeply concerned about the world situation. Have you not read how it all ends? Have you not read the Book of Revelation? Just like Moses who didn’t know all the details but he knew enough to realize God was in control and in the end would be victorious, get the victory over His enemies and they would know who He is. We can criticize those Israelites and say they should have known better, after all, look at what all they had seen with their own eyes and they knew what God had promised… so should we!

So talk to me, what can we learn here in this passage about faith and about the completeness of God’s salvation?

Well what the Israelites experienced that day caused the people to worship God, didn’t it? And so should we. As the redeemed saints of God, those saved by His grace, we too should respond in worship. Exodus 15 is known as the Song of Moses, a song of praise…

READ Exodus 15:1-3

Then, as you read thru the song, the people recount in detail what God did to Pharaoh and his army. And since we know God did this we know that he will do the same to our enemies in the land of promise. That’s their song. Our God is mighty! He is glorious in power! He shatters His enemies! There is none like Him!

READ Exodus 15:17-18

The Lord will plant His people on the mountain, a reference to the land that He had promised Abraham some 700 years before. And the song closes with that great refrain, “The Lord will reign forever and ever!” A foreshadowing of Revelation 22 which tells us, “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it [the holy city Jerusalem], and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” Something for us to look forward to!

The Israelites join Moses in singing a song of national deliverance to the Lord. They sing of the greatness of God demonstrated by His victory over the Egyptian army. Now you would think that the people have learned an important lesson. You would think that they know now that they can trust God, right? No! Just three days later, they don’t even make it out of Exodus Chapter 15, and the people once again complain to Moses. This time it is about bitter tasting water that they have encountered in the wilderness. We’ll pick it up there next week. How soon they forget!

Don’t be like them. As Christians, as those saved by God’s grace, redeemed from the pit of hell, we must never forget. That is why we need to be in this book, the Bible every day. We need to be reading about who God is, what He did, what He does, what He is going to do, and His unfailing promises to us. We need to be reminded daily lest we become like these people. It’s easy to do once you get your focus off of God and on yourselves or your circumstances.

So, let’s sing to the Lord, our strength and our salvation, for He has triumphed gloriously over sin, death and hell – “How Firm a Foundation”