

# Praise with Music

Exodus 15:11-21

SS Lesson for 09/05/2021

**Devotional Scripture:** Rev 15:2-4

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Exodus 15:11*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### MUSICAL SONG ABOUT GOD'S MAJESTIC POWER (EXODUS 15:11-13)

*God's power displayed in His works (11)*

God's works are great (Ps 111:2)

God's works are wonderful (Ps 145:5-6)

God's works are awesome (Ps 66:3)

God's works are mighty (Jer 32:18-19)

*God's power through His right hand (12)*

God's hands are on His witnesses (Acts 11:21)

God's hands provide unity (2 Chron 30:12)

God's hands provides guidance (Ezra 7:9)

God's hands provide provisions (Neh 2:8)

God's hands provides blessings (Luke 1:66)

*God's power displayed in His mercy (13)*

God's mercy keeps Him from putting an end to the wicked (Neh 9:29-31)

God's mercy sometimes causes Him to relent (Ps 106:45)

God's mercy empowers perseverance (James 5:11)

God's mercy makes Christians a people of God (1 Peter 2:10)

#### MUSICAL SONG ABOUT FEARING GOD (EXODUS 15:14-16)

*Fear God through His Word (14)*

God's word is powerful because it is the power for salvation (Rom 1:16)

God's word is powerful because it always achieves its purpose (Isa 55:10-11)

God's word is powerful because it is life (John 6:63)

God's word is powerful because it is the actual word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

*Fear God because of His authority (15)*

God has the authority because He stands behind every Word He says (Jer 1:17)

God has the authority because He is the great "I AM" (Exodus 3:14)

God has the authority because He establishes all (2 Cor 1:20-21)

God has the authority because He is the only one who has the power (Job 40:8-10)

*Fear God because He owns us (16)*

God owns us because He bought us with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)

God owns us because He made us (Ps 100:3)

God owns us because Jesus redeemed us (Titus 2:14)

God owns us because He dwells in us (Rom 8:9-11)

#### MUSICAL SONG ABOUT GOD'S MIGHTY REIGN (EXODUS 15:17-19)

*God reigns over His creations (17)*

God reigns over creation because it was accomplished by His Word (Ps 33:6-9)

God reigns over creation because the Trinity accomplished it (John 1:1-3)

God reigns over creation because God's invisible qualities are displayed (Rom 1:19-20)

God reigns over creation because it was formed by His Will (Rev 4:11)

*God reigns eternally (18)*

God reigns eternally because He established it (Ps 9:7)

God reigns eternally because He endures forever (Ps 102:12)

God reigns eternally from generation to generation (Lam 5:19)

God reigns eternally because He is enthroned forever (Ps 29:10)

*God reigns over His people (19)*

God reigns over all nations (Ps 47:8)

God reigns over all His dominion (Ps 22:28)

God reigns over all the world (Ps 96:10)

#### MUSICAL SONG ABOUT GOD'S TRIUMPH (EXODUS 15:20-21)

##### *God triumphs deserves worship (20)*

God deserves worship because He is due it (Ps 29:2)

God deserves worship because He is the creator (Ps 95:6-7)

God deserves worship through offering ourselves as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)

God deserves worship because of His eternal kingdom (Heb 12:28)

##### *God triumphs are glorious (21)*

God's triumphs are glorious because He rules over them (1 Chron 29:11)

God's triumphs are glorious because they are a matter of power (1 Cor 4:20)

God's triumphs are glorious because through them we are saved (Rev 12:10)

#### CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

##### COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

*God's Victory Over the Egyptians in the Red Sea (15:1-12)*

*God's Victory Over the Enemies of Israel in the Future (15:13-21)*

##### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

##### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Long before the exodus of 1447 BC, God had promised Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 13:14–15; 26:3; 28:13). The fulfillment of the promise seemed to be in jeopardy when Jacob and his family moved to Egypt because of a famine in Canaan. Still, God worked through Joseph, a son of Jacob, so that the family could have all it needed during the years of famine (41:53–54). Over the centuries, the Israelites witnessed significant leadership changes in Egypt, from native Egyptians, to foreign intruders, and then back to the Egyptians again. These intruders are sometimes called Hyksos or “shepherd kings,” but the word more likely just means foreigners who ruled Egypt. This caused the Egyptians to develop an even greater dislike for shepherds (compare Genesis 46:34), something that became very significant in the history of the emerging nation of Israel. Finally there came a new king to whom Joseph’s reputation meant nothing (Exodus 1:8). The original favor Jacob (Israel) and his sons experienced changed into servitude and oppression. Measures were taken to subdue the people and slow their population growth. After the Israelites spent 430 years in Egypt (12:40–41), God was ready to act to fulfill the promises (2:23–25). It was during this time that Moses was born. It is well-known that he was adopted by a princess of Egypt, but he had to flee Egypt at age 40 after killing an Egyptian (Exodus 2; the age factor for this event is found only in Acts 7:23). Forty years later Moses encountered the Lord at Sinai. God called Moses to lead his enslaved people away from Egypt, and the promise was repeated (Exodus 3:8). God worked through Moses and Aaron (Moses’ brother) to bring about nine plagues that devastated Egypt. The tenth plague took the lives of all the firstborn except among the Israelites. At that point Pharaoh expelled the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 12:31–33). It had been 430 years to the day since Jacob and his family entered Egypt (12:40–41). As God’s people left Egypt, they were reminded again that their destination was Canaan (13:5, 11). Pharaoh, however, changed his mind and decided to bring his labor force back (Exodus 14:5–8). The Egyptians pursued Israel to the edge of the Red Sea. It seemed that the Israelites were blocked by the sea and victory for the Egyptians was assured. God had other plans. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea safely after the waters parted, but the Egyptians drowned when they tried to follow. The God of Israel was superior to any of the fictitious gods of Pharaoh! The crossing of the Red Sea was pivotal in the history of ancient Israel. The slaves were free, beyond reach of Pharaoh. Moses and the people responded by bursting forth with joyous singing (Exodus 15:1–21). The printed text for this lesson concerns their song. The first song in the history of this new nation is a song of rejoicing because of the victory that the Lord has obtained for the people. We note in passing that there is a minor difficulty in finding an appropriate designation for this song. It is sometimes called a Song of Moses and Miriam (compare Exodus 15:20–21) or a Song of Moses and Israel (15:1). A Song of Moses already exists in Deuteronomy 32; see 31:30, which introduces the chapter that follows as a “song” of Moses.

## Key Verse: Exodus 15:11

11 "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**15:1-6.** In the first section the theme is immediately stated—the destruction of the Egyptian army in **the sea** (v. 1; cf. v. 4). Moses acknowledged the great **strength** (v. 2; cf. v. 13) and **power** (v. 6; cf. v. 16) of the only true **God** in bringing about such an awesome deliverance (**salvation**). For that reason Moses said God caused him to rejoice (**He is... my song**).

**15:7-11.** This second section details the crushing of the Egyptians by God. These verses stress the mighty power of God (**the greatness of Your majesty**, v. 7) in controlling the elements and in using them to destroy His adversaries. **The blast of Your nostrils** (v. 8) refers to the wind that parted the sea, and the words **You blew with Your breath** (v. 10) refer to the wind that collapsed the billowed water; these are poetic anthropomorphisms. The Egyptians, confident of victory (v. 9), arrogantly charged against Israel, but in the minutest expense of divine energy God utterly destroyed them (**they sank like lead**; cf. v. 5, "they sank... like a stone"). Recognition of God's mighty works led Moses to extol the Lord's uniqueness: **Who is like You?** (Cf. Pss. 35:10; 71:19; 77:13; 89:6; 113:5; Micah 7:18.) No one is like Him **in holiness and glory**.

**15:12-18.** Then Moses described the consequences of Israel's deliverance by such a great God. As a result of this marvelous triumph by His **right hand** (cf. v. 6) God in His **unfailing love** (*hesed*, "loyal love") would then lead His own into His **holy dwelling** in the Promised Land. Another result was that other nations would fear Israel, especially those lands Israel was about to enter. The greatness of Egypt had been effaced, her land ravished, her people left in mourning, and her army destroyed. Other nations, hearing of the power of the Israelites' God, would cower in fear. **People of Philistia**, mentioned first, would have been some of the first ones to have heard of the Red (Reed) Sea crossing. **Edom** was located south and east of the Dead Sea, and **Moab** was immediately north of Edom. According to Joshua's account of the Conquest, the Canaanites had a predisposed fear of the Israelites (cf. Deut. 2:25; Josh. 2:9-11, 24; 5:1). Moses' triumphal song includes the assurance (Ex. 15:17) that God would **bring** His people into the Promised Land and to Jerusalem, **the mountain of God's inheritance**, where His presence would be evident in **the sanctuary**. Moses also affirmed the fact that **the LORD will reign** over His people **forever**. God is to be praised for what He did in effecting a mighty deliverance, for what He was then doing in preparing the land for conquest, and for what He will do in His eternal reign.

**15:19-21.** Though at first glance verse 19 may seem to be misplaced in the narrative, it purposefully repeats the reason for such joyful praise—the defeat of the Egyptian army in **the sea** (cf. v. 1) and the deliverance of **the Israelites**. This verse has three clauses each ending (in Heb.) with the word **sea**. **Miriam** (cf. Num. 12:1-2) is the first woman in the Bible to be called a **prophetess**. Micah suggested that she, along with Moses and Aaron, had a significant leadership role in Israel's wilderness wanderings (Micah 6:4). Since Moses was 80 years old and Aaron was 83 at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 7:7), Miriam was probably in her 90s because she was a young girl when Moses was born (2:4, 7-9). She and **the women** with her danced **with tambourines** (cf. 1 Sam. 18:6) as she **sang** a joyful reply to Moses' song of God's triumph over the Egyptians (cf. Ex. 15:21 with v. 1).

## Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

### Musical Song about God's Majestic Power (Exodus 15:11-13)

11 "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

12 You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them.

13 You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation.

## **God's power displayed in His works (11)**

*God's works are great (Ps 111:2)*

2 Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

*God's works are wonderful (Ps 145:5-6)*

5 They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. 6 They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds.

*God's works are awesome (Ps 66:3)*

3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.

*God's works are mighty (Jer 32:18-19)*

18 You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, 19 great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.

## **God's power through His right hand (12)**

*God's hands are on His witnesses (Acts 11:21)*

21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

*God's hands provide unity (2 Chron 30:12)*

12 Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the Lord.

*God's hands provides guidance (Ezra 7:9)*

9 He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him.

*God's hands provide provisions (Neh 2:8)*

8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

*God's hands provides blessings (Luke 1:66)*

66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

## **God's power displayed in His mercy (13)**

*God's mercy keeps Him from putting an end to the wicked (Neh 9:29-31)*

29 "You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. 30 For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. 31 But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

*God's mercy sometimes causes Him to relent (Ps 106:45)*

45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

*God's mercy empowers perseverance (James 5:11)*

11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

*God's mercy makes Christians a people of God (1 Peter 2:10)*

10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Musical Song about Fearing God (Exodus 15:14-16)**

14 "The people will hear and be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

15 Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.

16 Fear and dread will fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm They will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over whom You have purchased.

### **Fear God through His Word (14)**

*God's word is powerful because it is the power for salvation (Rom 1:16)*

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

*God's word is powerful because it always achieves its purpose (Isa 55:10-11)*

10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

*God's word is powerful because it is life (John 6:63)*

63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

*God's word is powerful because it is the actual word of God (1 Thess 2:13)*

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

### **Fear God because of His authority (15)**

*God has the authority because He stands behind every Word He says (Jer 1:17)*

17 "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them.

*God has the authority because He is the great "I AM" (Exodus 3:14)*

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

*God has the authority because He establishes all (2 Cor 1:20-21)*

20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. 21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,

*God has the authority because He is the only one who has the power (Job 40:8-10)*

8 "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? 9 Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? 10 Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty.

### **Fear God because He owns us (16)**

*God owns us because He bought us with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)*

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

*God owns us because He made us (Ps 100:3)*

3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

*God owns us because Jesus redeemed us (Titus 2:14)*

14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

*God owns us because He dwells in us (Rom 8:9-11)*

9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

### **Musical Song about God's Mighty Reign (Exodus 15:17-19)**

17 You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, In the place, O Lord, which You have made For Your own dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

18 "The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

19 For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

### **God reigns over His creations (17)**

*God reigns over creation because it was accomplished by His Word (Ps 33:6-9)*

6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

*God reigns over creation because the Trinity accomplished it (John 1:1-3)*

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

*God reigns over creation because God's invisible qualities are displayed (Rom 1:19-20)*

19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

*God reigns over creation because it was formed by His Will (Rev 4:11)*

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

### **God reigns eternally (18)**

*God reigns eternally because He established it (Ps 9:7)*

7 The Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment.

*God reigns eternally because He endures forever (Ps 102:12)*

12 But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations.

*God reigns eternally from generation to generation (Lam 5:19)*

19 You, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.

*God reigns eternally because He is enthroned forever (Ps 29:10)*

10 The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever.

### **God reigns over His people (19)**

*God reigns over all nations (Ps 47:8)*

8 God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.

*God reigns over all His dominion (Ps 22:28)*

28 for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.

*God reigns over all the world (Ps 96:10)*

10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.

### **Musical Song about God's Triumph (Exodus 15:20-21)**

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

21 And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

### **God triumphs deserves worship (20)**

*God deserves worship because He is due it (Ps 29:2)*

2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

*God deserves worship because He is the creator (Ps 95:6-7)*

6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; 7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,

*God deserves worship through offering ourselves as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)*

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

*God deserves worship because of His eternal kingdom (Heb 12:28)*

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

## God triumphs are glorious (21)

*God's triumphs are glorious because He rules over them (1 Chron 29:11)*

11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

*God's triumphs are glorious because they are a matter of power (1 Cor 4:20)*

20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

*God's triumphs are glorious because through them we are saved (Rev 12:10)*

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### **Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **God's Victory Over the Egyptians in the Red Sea (15:1-12)**

Generally speaking, the structure of the "Song of the Sea" is straightforward. The simplest division of the song is two-fold: (1) What God had done for Israel by drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea (vss. 1-12); (2) What God will therefore surely do for Israel in the future (vss. 13-21). Finer distinctions can be drawn, but there is less agreement as one becomes more detailed in the breakdown of the song.

Moses apparently wrote the song, and may have led Israel as they sang it. The first refrain, "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea" (v. 1) is echoed by Miriam, who led the women in singing almost the same words and dancing: "Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea" (v. 21). While this song was sung corporately as Israel's expression of praise and thanksgiving for God's deliverance from Egypt through the Red Sea, verses 1 and 2 express this praise in a personal and singular. The first person pronouns "I" and "my" make the praise here personal.

In typical psalm-like fashion, the acts of God are viewed as evidences of His nature and character. Consequently, the defeat of the Egyptians is described in poetic imagery. God's deliverance is then viewed in the light of the character of God which is demonstrated in His deliverance.

With dramatic poetic strokes, the event which just occurred in the midst of the Red Sea is described. While natural forces are employed, they are seen as miraculous events, brought about by the direct intervention and involvement of God. The Lord is said to have "hurled the Egyptians into the sea" (v. 4). They sank to the depths "like a stone" (v. 5). The winds are described as coming from the "nostrils of God" (v. 8). The waters "congealed" so as to "pile up like a wall" (v. 8). God's sovereignty is evidenced by His control over the forces of nature (e.g. the winds), and by His ability as the Creator to cause nature to act unnaturally (e.g. the "congealing" of the water, so as to pile up like a wall).

In verses 9 and 10, the sovereignty of God is seen in His ability to prevail, as a mighty warrior (cf. v. 3) over the Egyptians, the mightiest army on the face of the earth. They arrogantly pursued the Israelites, confident of victory (v. 9). In spite of their power and confidence, God simply "blew them away," causing them to "sink like lead" in the sea (v. 10). The greatest army on the face of the earth was no problem for the God of Israel to dispose of.

Verses 11 and 12 summarize the implications of the mighty acts of God at the Red Sea, focusing upon God's nature and character: "Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them." The greatness and the goodness of God are thus recognized by the Israelites as they reflect on God's victory over their enemies, the Egyptians. What impresses me about the conclusions which this song reveals is that they are the same as those purposes God has already stated in the Book of Exodus. What God intended for His people to learn from the miracles of the exodus is exactly what they concluded, as indicated in the song which they sang.

Before his return to Egypt, God told Moses that Pharaoh would not release the Israelites until He compelled him to "with a mighty hand," revealed by performing "wonders" among them (Exod. 3:19-20; cf. 6:1). Now, after

their passing through the Red Sea, Israel praised God for what His “mighty hand” had done (vss. 6, 9, 12). God revealed through Moses that He was about to “bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt” (Exod. 12:12). Now, after the exodus, Israel proclaims, “Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?” (Exod 15:11). By the exodus, God said that Israel would know He was the Lord their God, who brought them out from under the yoke of the Egyptians (Exod. 6:7). Thus, after the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites sang, “He is my God, and I will praise him” (Exod 15:2). That which God sought to accomplish in the events of the exodus, He did accomplish, as seen by the praises of His people in this song.

### **God’s Victory Over the Enemies of Israel in the Future (15:13-21)**

The first half of the “song of Moses” emphasizes the defeat of Israel’s enemies, the Egyptians. The second half of this song, in verses 13-21, is upon the defeat of those who would oppose Israel in the future. To state the matter differently, the first half of the song dwells on the Egyptians’ defeat, while the second half focuses on Israel’s deliverance, especially that deliverance which was yet to come, the defeat of those enemies who would resist Israel’s possession of the land of Canaan, which God promised He would give them.

The New International Version clearly underscores the shift from the past defeat of the Egyptians to the future defeat of Israel’s enemies by consistently rendering the verbs of verses 13 and following in the future tense. Thus, while verses 1-12 have dwelt on God’s past deliverance of His people, verses 13-21 look to His future deliverance of the Israelites.

Rightly, the Israelites saw the plagues and their passing through the Red Sea as a beginning. God did not just promise to release the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, He promised to bring them into the promised land of Canaan. In one sense, the whole exodus event was somewhat of a secondary matter, a means for His people to possess the land of Canaan:

“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. . . . And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord’” (Exod. 6:6, 8).

Verse 13 therefore begins with a summary statement of what God is yet to accomplish for His people. Out of His unfailing love, He will lead His people, whom He has just redeemed, into His “holy dwelling.” There is a lack of consensus as to what is meant by the expression “holy dwelling” here. I doubt that it’s primary reference is to the temple (cf. Psalm 92:13), which is, as yet, not an element of Israel’s hope. The song could be referring to the promised land of Canaan as God’s “holy dwelling” (cf. Psalm 78:54; Isaiah 11:9). In the light of the promise of God to Abraham that the sign of His presence with Israel would be that Israel would worship God on “this (holy) mountain” (Exod. 3:12; cf. v. 5), the “holy dwelling” may be Mount Sinai. In any case, I believe that the “holy dwelling” of God is a reference to the promised land, whether or not a particular place (either Mt. Sinai or the temple) is also in mind.

The hope expressed in verse 13 will require the defeat of Israel’s enemies, the Canaanites, who will resist their entrance and possession of the land. The means of accomplishing this are viewed as the same as those used to deliver her from Egypt and the Egyptian army. The defeat of Israel’s Canaanite foes is thus described in verses 14-15. The defeat of the Canaanites is assured by the defeat of the Egyptians, the most formidable enemy of all. The Canaanites will be more easily overcome because of the terror produced by the report of the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. They will know that the God of Israel is a God of might, a warrior (v. 3), who is able to overcome the enemies of His people.

There is a play on words evident in the second half of the “Song of the Sea,” which takes up some of the same expressions or imagery employed to describe the defeat of the Egyptians and uses them to apply to the defeat of the Canaanites. For example, the Egyptian soldiers were said to have sunk “like a stone” in the Red Sea (15:5). Now, the terrified Canaanites are prophesied to become “as still as a stone” (15:16). As the arm of the Lord enabled Israel to pass through the Red Sea, so the Israelites will pass through their enemies (15:16).

Verses 17 and 18 conclude with a confident affirmation that God will bring His people in to the promised land, where He will plant them on His holy mountain. Perhaps now the reference to the Lord’s sanctuary does refer to the temple. At least this can be the fulfillment in a way that is more specific than Israel anticipated. There, the Lord will reign over His people for ever and ever. The Lord is now seen, for the first time I believe, as Israel’s king. The treaty between God and His people will be delivered to them from Mt. Sinai. The exodus will serve as the basis for that treaty, as the early chapters of Deuteronomy will make clear.

Verses 19 and 20 turn from poetry to prose, but they may still be a part of the song. These verses serve to emphasize the fact that Israel’s hope for the future is directly related to God’s act of deliverance at the Red Sea.

Miriam, a prophetess and the sister of Aaron (not to mention Moses, cf. footnote 3), led the women as they repeated the first refrain of the “Song of the Sea,” which must have been quite a feat for a woman who would have had to be around 90 years old. Both the men and the women seemed to have sung their own parts in this marvelous hymn of praise.

The “Song of the Sea” was obviously important to the Israelites who passed through the Red Sea, and who sang it as recorded in our text. It served as a vehicle by means of which they could praise God. It also provided the mechanism for recording and recalling God’s great act of deliverance at the Red Sea. It directed Israel’s attention on the character of God, and it produced hope and confidence in God’s future protection and blessing.

The “Song of the Sea” reveals the great significance the exodus event had for the one who had passed through the sea, but what value does this event have for others? Is the exodus and the passing of Israel through the Red Sea only dull history, unrelated to our lives? Far from it, the exodus is a theme which permeates the remainder of the Old Testament, as well as the New. For saints of every age, the exodus is both a prototype and a prophecy of the future redemption(s) of God. Notice the following allusions to the exodus or to the terminology of the “Song of the Sea”:

(1) The events of the exodus were retold to the next generation of Israelites, as the basis and motivation for their obedience to the Law which God had given (cf. Deut. 4:32-40; 7:17-19).

(2) In the crossing of the Jordan, there is a decided parallel to the crossing of the Red Sea (cf. Josh. 3:14-17).

(3) The story of Israel’s exodus and portions of the “Song of the Sea” are frequently quoted in the Psalms.

(4) Throughout the Book of Isaiah, as well as in some of the other prophets, the deliverance of Israel from its bondage in Egypt was likened to the deliverance of Israel and Judah from their Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Thus, either by a direct reference or by an allusion, the exodus is constantly drawn upon as a symbol and source of hope for Israel’s future deliverance.

(5) The exodus was, in the Old Testament prophets and in the New Testament gospels, a prototype of the greatest redemption of all, the redemption of men’s souls from bondage to sin, which was accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ, the lamb of God (cf. Luke 9:31, where the “departure” which Jesus was discussing with His disciples was literally His “exodus”).

(6) In the Book of Revelation, the deliverance of Israel (as depicted in the “Song of the Sea”) was seen as typical or symbolic of the deliverance of the tribulation saints (Rev. 15:1-4).

Biblical history is not written to bore us with irrelevant details. It is written in order to provide our faith with historical roots. Israel’s hope regarding the future (Exod. 15:13-21) was rooted in their experience in history, through the plagues and their passing through the Red Sea. So, too, our future hope is based upon God’s actions in the past, both in our experience, and in the experience of those who have lived (and experienced the hand of God) before us. The Old Testament is therefore a rich source of faith-building history, which assures us of what God can do, based upon our knowledge of what God has already done. This assumes, of course, that we read the Old Testament with the “eyes of faith,” believing that these events did happen, as they were described.

The “Song of the Sea” and the exodus experience which it describes is an excellent illustration of a principle which is taught in the New Testament:

And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Rom. 5:2b-5).

Here, Paul is teaching us that the joy of the Christian remains, and even grows, in the midst of trials and tribulation. The more difficult things become, the more our faith is put to the test. The more our tested faith proves to be legitimate and living faith, the more hope we have for the future. It is the testing of tribulation and trials which shows that our faith is much more than a “fair weather faith,” thus giving us even greater confidence in the future.

Israel came to know God in a greater way as a result of the trials and testings that they experienced in Egypt and in the wilderness. We, too, come to know God more intimately and more fully in the midst of the trials which He leads us through. And when we “pass through” these trials, we look to the future fulfillment of God’s promises as even more certain, having experienced His faithfulness in the tough times of our lives.

The “Song of the Sea” which the Israelites sang also serves to remind us that our security and hope are ultimately dependent upon the character of God. While their song described the deeds of God in the destruction

of their enemies, the song points to the character of God which His actions point to. God's greatness, goodness, and faithfulness are the basis for our faith and our hope. Ultimately, we trust a person for his character, and not for his abilities. God is both able and willing to help us in our time of need. The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New, and because He does not change (Jas. 1:17), we can trust in His character as demonstrated in the lives of the saints of old.

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/song-sea-exodus-15>)*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Our songs always come with context. For instance, the story behind "Amazing Grace" adds depth to the lyrics of the song itself. Its long history in England and especially in North America has shaped how we hear or sing it today. The situations in which we have heard it played or sung change how we process the lyrics. Different arrangements let us hear the song afresh. Like the song that Moses, Miriam, and the people sang, our songs come from specific situations: of deliverance, of healing, of crossing from death into life. When we sing, with whom we sing—these things matter! Therefore, let us do as the psalmist challenged us and "sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things" (Psalm 98:1). What song will you sing as a result of God's character and work in your life—in your family, church, and community?

### **Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary**

A People in Bondage - The Hebrew nation, God's chosen people, lived in Egypt for 430 years (Exod. 12:40). A new Pharaoh, who knew nothing about Joseph, took over. He became threatened by the vast number of Israelites. He placed God's children into a cruel sub-servant position—bondage. The people cried out to God, and He selected Moses to perform many miraculous acts for their deliverance. The Father, with His mighty hand, freed His people from their oppressors, and they celebrated with praise.

Their Deliverance - Pharaoh realized with the absence of the Hebrews he had given up his free labor. He foolishly pursued his former slaves. He believed, with his mighty army, he could force them back into slavery. But God stood as the defender of His weaponless nation. He opened the Red Sea, and all the children of Israel walked through on dry ground to the other side. When the Egyptian army followed, God caused the sea to rejoin, drowning Pharaoh's men.

Their Song - After the people stood safely on the other side of the sea, Moses led the congregation in singing. In Exodus 15, he recorded the hymn of praise and thanksgiving. The last part of the song spoke of God's character, and how absolutely no one is comparable to Jehovah. This generation of Hebrews became awfully familiar with Egypt's multi-god culture. The 10 plagues God afflicted on the Egyptians through Moses highlighted the power and superiority of God Almighty over all Egyptian gods or goddesses. They praised God for His goodness, wisdom, and great rescue. God stepped in like a kinsman, providing for those unable to provide for themselves. Then He guided them to a better place, a land of their own. Moses led the men in singing their anthem of praise. Then Miriam, the prophetess, sister of Aaron and Moses, took up her tambourine. Moses and the men had already sung out in praise, and now Miriam led the women, leaping, jumping, and shouting. What a thunderous celebration before the Lord.

A Victorious People - God purchased or redeemed the Hebrew children for Himself. He has redeemed us as well. We can sing a song of victory to Him and praise His holy name.