

Explore the Bible: Victory

September 6, 2017

- The **Explore the Bible** lesson for **Sept. 24** focuses on Exodus 14:13-28.

If the sessions leading up to this one have been “nail-biters” at all, be cautious lest you remove all your cartilage during this one. This is the pinnacle point of the Exodus as the post-Passover movement has led Israel by the miraculous pillars to their departure from Egypt.

God was leading the people of Israel purposefully while the Egyptians lurked behind. Like Israel, we may question God’s promise when his plan does not align with our expectations. We also must learn that our victory relies on God’s victory: *God will ultimately be victorious over his enemies and the enemies of his people.*

It is good to treat this session as a gradually unfolding drama, as the lesson suggests. We find the Hebrews at a place of mixed decision with Moses ready to tread forward and the people calling for retreat.

Even in Moses’ boldness to call for ceasing fear and standing firm, it seems interesting that he is somewhat reprimanded. His words were not the problem; in fact, they were exhorting: “The LORD will fight for you.” But as Jewish theologian Nahum Sarna points out, “It is time for action, not for lengthy prayer” (Sarna, *Exodus*, 55).

God calls them to move because this pinnacle victory will not only reveal one of the most well known miracles in history; even more, it will give God glory through Pharaoh’s demise. Ask your group: *How are we settling for discussion while God is calling us to action?*

Act 1: Separation

This movement, often overlooked or not referred to in this story, is remembered in Joshua 24:7, as well. Notice how both the angel of the Lord and the pillar of cloud moved from “leading at the front” to “protecting from the rear.” *How else might this visual of movement speak to us today?*

Usually the word “separation” brings concern, but in this case it is a barrier of safety between Israel and the Egyptians. Verse 20 clearly states that “neither went near the other all night long.” In this case, separation equaled security.

Not only this, but the way of one group (Israel) was given light, while the other (Egyptians) was left in darkness. It is true that when God calls us to action, he will still provide a path to follow, and he may even shine the light forward while he leads from behind. *Share a practical example that follows this part of the story. How has God both protected and led you?*

Act 2: Crossing

This critical scene is another positive example of Moses’ obedience as he simply acted in the way God commanded him in verse 16. Now they had arrived at the shore, and now the people would watch as God used his divine command over nature to separate the waters and create dry ground.

One cannot help but recall how creation began similarly in Genesis 1-2 with God approaching the chaotic waters. The difference here is God is inviting human participation. Yet make no mistake; it is God’s power that made this happen, not Moses’ “magic hand raise.” *Consider how beautiful it is that God invites humanity to play its part in his divine plan.*

We tend to give greater attention to miraculous moments such as this, yet we would do well to see there is more to God’s glory and victory than one

moment. This miracle took time to be accomplished, and it also took time for the entire nation to cross. Obedience requires *walking*, and miracles involve *ordinary people* encountering our *extraordinary God*.

Act 3: Victory

No clearer an image of God's divine intervention may be found. This should cause the believer to tremble at how he or she has asked for God's intervention, because it generally involves a terrible state such as this. However, this is all part of God's promise to be glorified by all.

This dramatic completion shows the enemy pursuing with intent, and in their confusion and dismantling, they recognized that they were fighting against Yahweh, Israel's God. Their flight was futile because God's justice—and he always is just—would be served fully. *Discuss how we tend to define justice and compare it to God's justice for the Egyptians.*

Thomas Jefferson once said, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever." What happened to Egypt is what will happen to all nations, in that God's patience for justice will last until his time for accomplishing it. The trembling piece of this reality is that God's justice is as big as his victory, both of which are greater than us.

Conclusion

Psalm 46:10 is a wonderful meditation for this victory account: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Both of these aspects are present in our session today as Yahweh fought on Israel's behalf and the people—both Israel and Egypt—gave glory to God.

Peter Enns points out, "The Exodus is not a story of liberation in the sense

in which many use it today, but a story of salvation” (Enns, *Exodus*, 292). Salvation is both the victory for the people and the revelation of God himself. This new nation was coming to know God through this unfolding drama.

Consider this: God is revealing himself to you by every means of your unfolding life story. As he did for his chosen people, he will also use each act to bring you to his victory, seeing his divine glory. In light of this, let’s “move on.”

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