

Week 6: Our journey to freedom

Exodus 13:17-15:21

Aim: To see the glory of the LORD and know him through his powerful work of judgment and deliverance. This episode is formational for God's people Israel, and ultimately points us to the coming, cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ through which he has rescued us to be his children and receive his rest. We need to recognize whom we should fear and persevere in that trust in this life, even as circumstances and sin try to persuade us otherwise. Our assurance is that as the LORD has saved us so he will lead us there.

Getting Started:

Share a time you saw someone rescued from danger

Pray for understanding as we read God's word.

What is God saying?

Read Exodus 13:17-22

Notice the different elements of Israel's departure. Who is doing what? And why do you think these are detailed?

Notice God is leading Israel, and considering what is most helpful to them – not where war with the Philistines is likely and would dishearten.

Instead, it's the way of the Red Sea.

Also God visibly present and leading and lighting their way by the pillar of cloud and of fire.

Moses taking Joseph's bones is a reminder of the confident hope Joseph the patriarch - who had been a previous instrument of God's rescue of his people – had that what he'd only received in promise would be fulfilled – and so taking his bones is a reminder to them and us that what he promises he delivers, even as they set out with his most recent promises

Read Exodus 14:1-14

How bad is the situation for Israel, and what is their reaction?

The full force of Pharaoh and Egypt - which was already proven powerful by their oppression of Israel - is bearing down on them, using the latest in military tech – chariots – and his officers and army. They overtake them. The Israelites were terrified and cried out – they're hemmed in by the sea on one side and Pharaoh's might on the other - they despair

And what is the LORD's response through Moses?

Vv13-14 Do not be afraid. Stand firm. See the LORD in action. He will deliver them. The Egyptians you fear will kill you will themselves be killed. The LORD will fight for you. You need only be still, off to the side, this is a job for him and not for you. Trust him.

Read Exodus 14:15-31 or vv21-22 & vv26-31

How does the LORD destroy his enemy and what is the effect?

By him using Moses as his agent to deliver his people – dividing the water v16 then v21-22

By him hardening the Egyptian's hearts so they go in – no risk assessment! – after them v17 then vv 23-31 confusing them, jamming their wheels, and drowning them

By using angel of God and the pillar of cloud and fire moving between the Egyptian army and the Israelite 'army' keeping them divided on land ready for Israel's escape

Effects –

V17 - 18 He promises it will gain him glory by destruction of the Egyptians and the Egyptians will know him, the LORD

V25 Egyptians get it right when they call out – the LORD is fighting for them

Israelites delivered – as promised – according to plan – by the mighty hand of the LORD, and they feared the Lord (v31)

Read Colossians 2:13-15

How does this episode in Exodus foreshadow and find itself superseded in the gospel?

They were enslaved to Egypt, unable to free themselves, pointing to their and our enslavement to sin and the judgement of death. As he at the Exodus glorified himself and showed his majesty in judgement and mercy in deliverance, triumphing over his enemies to save his people, now he has done that through Christ's triumph over sin and its hold on us, and the other spiritual enemies that stood against him, and through his resurrection, that we may be raised from spiritual death to life and experience rest in his service

(As an aside if you'd like to look it up, John's gospel has a lot to say about Jesus' and the Father's glory, a theme prominent and yet superseded in Exodus as it is overshadowed by the gospel)

Why is God saying this?

[These are suggestions only. Consider your own answers beforehand, and navigate what comes up for your group]

What have you learnt or been reminded of regarding our LORD – who he is and how he acts?

His mighty work – and specifically of judging his enemies – and through judgement delivering a privileged people for himself – is at the core of who he is and how he is known – whether one experiences him as the receiver of judgement or deliverance.

He is good, and loving, and leads his people.

We may find his judgement and justice hard to get our heads around, and yet his words and actions reveal his authority, complexity, plans, and purposes. We're called to trust him and his gospel on the terms of who he is and has revealed himself to be rather than what we find acceptable

In what way does this speak into the fears we can see or dwell on our minds

We may have well founded and not so well-founded fears. Wisdom is needed to see the world through the LORD's eyes to see which is which. In our sin we may so easily turn to false gods or despair of hope in God because of our circumstances and our experience of sin, the world and the devil leading to 'deceptive/counterfeit' fears. But if we 'fear the LORD' we are his children and truly wise.

That's not to say we won't experience real and intense difficulty, but being reminded of the deliverance through the Red Sea, and the wider words of Scripture, and the gospel and so knowing the LORD, we know we already have received his rest, and will see it in all its fullness when Jesus returns

How may we pray for each other as we walk in the fear of the LORD?

Knowing each other specifically will help us know more specific aspects of these general prayers we can pray for each other, but here are suggestions for the general -

Pray for repentance toward and faith in the LORD for those who don't share it yet

Pray for growth in knowing the LORD by means of his word and the mighty deeds we see unfold there so we walk in wisdom, and obedience, and discipline, and say no to the way of sin, the world, and the devil.

Prayer Starters

- Thank God for his planned, purposeful and glorious salvation
- Pray that he may enable us to name and respond rightly in the face of our counterfeit fears
- Pray God's spirit may bring and strengthen in us the fear of the LORD

Growing Growth Group Suggestion

We suggested this two weeks ago, but why not do it again? Plan for someone to share their story at the beginning of next week - of a significant time when Jesus' gospel changed them

Are there any people I should follow up this week?