

## **Lesson for September 5, 2021, "Moses and Miriam Praise God"**

Background Scripture: Exodus 14:1-15:1-21

Background: Over roughly 400 years, the 70 members of Jacob's family who had moved from Canaan to Egypt had grown to over 600,000 strong (Exodus 12:37). They lived freely in Goshen until a new pharaoh came to power. He was unaware of the life-saving role that Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, had played in saving Egypt and surrounding countries from famine. Threatened by this growing population, Pharaoh tried to decrease their numbers through genocide and enslavement. The people prayed for salvation from oppression. God answered, upholding the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose name had been changed to Israel. Through a man called Moses, God performed ten mighty acts that forced Pharaoh to end the Israelites' slavery. Pharaoh couldn't accept the fact that he had been defeated by the God of slaves. He set out to find and kill them. In an act of salvation, God walled back the waters of the Red Sea, giving the Israelites safe passage across the final barrier that blocked their exodus. The same waters drowned their oppressors. To memorialize God's intervention on their behalf, Moses and Miriam led the Israelites in a song of exuberant praise.

The Egyptian culture was known for its numerous gods and goddesses. There was a sun god who was responsible for light and a goddess who was in charge of fertility. Another goddess brought the rain and Pharaoh himself was believed to be the god who had power over all the inhabitants of the land. For the people who had just experienced deliverance and witnessed the annihilation of their oppressors, no god surpassed their God. He was unrivaled, not only in His power but also in His holiness and His worthiness to be praised. God had wiped out their enemies and that new reality gave them the courage and strength to sing about a future, unlike their past. This song of praise was also a song of hope. They looked forward, confident that their victorious God would guide them and bring them to a place where they

would dwell in God's holy presence. How has a past experience with God shaped your outlook about your future?

Exodus 15:11–13. The Egyptian culture was known for its numerous gods and goddesses. There was a sun god who was responsible for light and a goddess who was in charge of fertility. Another goddess brought the rain and Pharaoh himself was believed to be the god who had power over all the inhabitants of the land. But for the people who had just experienced deliverance and witnessed the annihilation of their oppressors, no god surpassed their God. He was unrivaled, not only in His power but also in His holiness and His worthiness to be praised. God had wiped out their enemies and that new reality gave them the courage and strength to sing about a future, unlike their past. This song of praise was also a song of hope. They looked forward, confident that their victorious God would guide them and bring them to a place where they would dwell in God's holy presence.

Sing to be Heard, verses 14–18 On their journey, the formerly enslaved people were going to meet people from other nations. News of God's mighty acts would have reached these nations before the Israelites actually arrived. How would the Canaanites respond? Would they realize that God was God? Or would fear lead to violent actions? The fitting response when learning about God's manifested power and goodness is holy reverence. Such an example is Rahab, the prostitute who protected the spies sent to assess Canaan. By the time the Children of Israel reached Jericho years later, she was able to recount the incident at the Red Sea (Joshua 2:9–11). The testimony embedded in this song had proceeded the spies and secured their safety, and the safety of Rahab and her family. The song at the Red Sea was a testimony meant to be shared so that others would hear, trust, and worship God.

Sing to Remember God's Goodness, verses 19–21. Miriam was a courageous woman who, as a child, defied Pharaoh's horrific decree to kill male babies. When her mother, Jochebed, placed her brother, Moses, in a water-tight basket and put him in the Nile River, Miriam kept an eye on the basket and when Pharaoh's

daughter found the baby and wanted to keep him, Miriam, with the daughter's consent, ran to get her mother to nurse him. Jochebed was able to rear Moses and share with him his true heritage. Now years later, Miriam was at her brother's side. She could trace God's deliverance in the past to the joys of freedom she and all Israelites were experiencing that day. Using the unique gifts God had given her as a prophetess, musician, and dancer, Miriam led a chorus of singers and dancers who recounted the triumphant victory of their God.

God gives us each unique gifts. We are given these gift to use for God's glory and to advance His Kingdom. Miriam discovered that she had been given the gift of prophecy and used this gift to help lead the Israelites to the Promised Land, along with her brothers, Moses and Aaron.

The Lord has given each of us gifts and wants us to use them to glorify Him, just as He used Miriam. How are we using the gifts God has given us?

**Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen.**

Next week's lesson September 12, 2021, "David Dances before the Ark"

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 6

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, International Sunday School Commentary, PCA Lesson on Miriam Praises God, and The Present Word Lesson.