

## **Exodus 14 - God Gains Glory For Himself at the Red Sea**

1. By Defeating the Egyptians
2. By Saving the Israelites

Dear People of God,

The story of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, and the Red Sea crossing in particular, is an exciting & dramatic story of intense pursuit, miraculous deliverance, & triumphant defeat. Given its action-filled storyline, it's no wonder that this event has been given so much attention. The story of the crossing of the Red Sea has been retold in popular children's songs & Bible Story books, and it has even been given attention by Walt Disney in their animated film production "The Prince of Egypt." But much more importantly, the Bible itself gives a great deal of attention to this event. There are innumerable references throughout the Old & New Testament which point back to the Red Sea crossing. For example, Exodus 15 glorifies God by recounting this event in song. Countless Psalms praise God as one "who split open sea," (Psalm 74:13) and so do many of the prophets. And this great event has also been given attention by the New Testament. In Acts 7:36 Stephen, the first martyr 先烈的 of the Christian church, recounts the miraculous signs & wonders that God performed at the Red Sea in his final speech prior to his martyrdom 殉难. In Hebrews 11:29, that great chapter about the heroes of faith, the author recalls that by faith the Israelites passed through the Red Sea as on dry land.

The reverberations 回响 of this event throughout the rest of Scripture serve to emphasize its significance as God's greatest act of salvation in the Old Testament. One of the reasons this was such a great event, & one of the reasons that the Bible gives so much attention to this event is that it is a magnificent event in which God brings much glory to Himself. And that's what God wants. He wants to bring glory to His great name. That's why He created world: to show forth His power & glory. And that's what He wants His creation & His people to do: to reflect back His power & glory. Even after Fall of the human race into sin, God sees to it that His glory is always displayed, whether in bringing judgment & defeat upon enemies or in bringing salvation to His people. We see both these truths clearly portrayed in the story of the Red Sea crossing. God's intention from the get-go was glorify Himself. And He did so in two ways: 1. By defeating the Egyptians 2. By saving the Israelites.

### **1. By Defeating the Egyptians**

God already announced His intention to glorify Himself in this event even before the Israelites reached the sea. In Exodus 14:4 the Lord said to Moses, "I will gain glory over Pharaoh & all his host, & the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." And in Exodus 14:17-18 the Lord again said to Moses, "I will gain glory over Pharaoh & all his host, his chariots, & his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I gain glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen." Commentating 评述 on the same event, the apostle Paul echoes this same intention in Romans 9:17, where he says, "For Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in You, & that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" God is very intentional in stating what He is up to—He is going to gain glory for Himself.

But, we may ask, just how is it that God is going to gain glory for Himself through Pharaoh & his army? The answer: by defeating them. When a king gains victory over his enemies in battle, he gains great glory for himself because his military victory shows his great power, and as result, the citizens of his kingdom respond by praising him for his great act of deliverance. So too here, God is like a king or warrior (as He is described in Exodus 15:3) who is going out to defeat His enemies & the enemies of His people. Pharaoh is trying to prevent God's plan of saving a people for Himself, so God must defeat His opponent, and this defeat will bring Him great glory. The first step God takes in defeating the Egyptians is to harden Pharaoh's heart. And this is not the 1<sup>st</sup> time God hardens his heart. Pharaoh had just seen one display of God's power after another in the 10 plagues, & each time he responded not in repentance but by hardening his heart. And now, his heart is hardened again. He regrets the loss of the Israelites services (:5b) and he calls upon all the powers at his disposal 处置权 (:6-9) to go off in hot pursuit of the Israelites.

Once again, Pharaoh sees marvelous displays of God's power. First, he sees the pillar of cloud move from its position in front of the Israelites to a position behind the Israelites. This cloud separates him from the Israelites who he wants to overtake. And at one and the same time this cloud both shrouds Pharaoh & his army in darkness & while giving light & direction to the Israelites. Secondly, Pharaoh sees a marvelous display of God's power in the miraculous opening up of pathway of dry ground right smack through the middle of the sea.

But... as before, these miracles do not soften Pharaoh's heart & cause him to believe. No! Instead, God uses these miracles to harden Pharaoh's heart again so as to lead him further into judgment, into the chaotic waters of God's judgment. This hardening of Pharaoh's heart is itself a form of judgment. It allows wise Pharaoh to play right into hand of the almighty & sovereign God who has complete control over all His enemies. What else but such a hardening of heart would cause a supposedly wise Pharaoh to take his entire army & his all horses & chariots & men into battle? And not just any battle, but a battle with the Almighty God who just slain every firstborn son throughout Egypt. And not just a battle anywhere, but a battle path that would lead them right through the middle of the sea which had walls of water on either side that could come crashing down upon them at any moment? By hardening Pharaoh's heart, God brought His enemies into place where could inflict crushing defeat upon them, & thus glorify Himself. And that's just what He does.

Once the Egyptians had entered the pathway in the sea, God threw them into confusion & made it difficult for them to drive (:25). Through another glorious display of His power, God saw to it that their chariot wheels became clogged 阻碍, or stuck, so that they started falling off. The Egyptian army with its world-class military technology of superior chariots & horses was thrown into confusion & disarray. And it is then that the Egyptians realize that the Lord God is fighting for the Israelites. When they are in the middle of sea, when God begins to bring defeat & final judgment upon them, then the Egyptians finally acknowledge that the Lord is God. The Egyptians confessed in verse 25, "The Lord fights for them against the Egyptians." Now they know & acknowledge the Lord is God; however, it is not an acknowledgment rooted in belief & repentance but an acknowledgment rooted in unbelief & terror. They do bow the knee to God in sense, as everyone will do one day when Jesus Christ returns again on the clouds of glory. They do recognize that God is a King who cannot be meddled with. But they are still enemies of God. This is clear because, rather than repenting as they should, they turn around & try flee from God. In verse 25 we read that the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them." But it was too late. At just that moment the Lord said to Moses, "<sup>26</sup>Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, & upon their horsemen.' <sup>27</sup>So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, & the sea returned to its normal course when morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. <sup>28</sup>The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; [And] of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained." They were defeated by Lord, they were drowned in midst of sea, & corpses were washed up on shore where bodies lay as testimony to Lord's glorious victory over them (:30). What a defeat!

This defeat is God's judgment upon the Egyptians. You could say it's like the 11<sup>th</sup> plague 瘟疫. After all the wonders recently performed in Egypt, this was the final showdown of God's glory. Here we see that God's enemies have no way of escaping His judgment. It does not matter how much of a world super-power or military power a people or nation is, no one can oppose God when He is determined to bring judgment upon His enemies. This is a reminder to us that if we think we can live lives opposed to God & somehow escape judgment, we are utterly wrong. He will conquer ever power that sets itself against Him. Furthermore, we see that this judgment comes in the form of a complete defeat so that not one of God's enemies remains. This is a source comfort for the believer, for we can be assured that ultimately all evil be banished. Not one of God's enemies will remain in after the final judgment. But this is a terrifying thought for those who are not trusting in Jesus Christ for deliverance from their sins, for they will never know an end to God's eternal wrath in hell.

So we see that this defeat brings God much glory as: First, his enemies do in the end acknowledge that He is indeed Lord. Second, other nations throughout the world stand in awe of His great power. When the Israelite spies entered Jericho some 40 years later to scout out the land, Rahab said, "We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of Red Sea for you when you came up out of Egypt.... When we heard of it, our hearts melted & everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above & on earth below" (Joshua 2:10-11). Third, some who heard of this great defeat were converted, as was Rahab the harlot. Fourth, as the Israelites praise Him for His great defeat, as we see in chapter 15. There we find an entire song of praise dedicated to how the Lord saved them from the hands of the Egyptians.

The Bible tells us that God will gain glory for Himself in a similar triumph over evil in future. This victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea foreshadows the glory God will gain for Himself in the Final Judgment which is coming, when God will once and for all overthrow all of His enemies. God's enemies are all those who do not trust in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. And all of God's enemies today see His glory & power & existence portrayed, not necessarily through miracles such as the 10 plagues & the Red Sea crossing, but, as

Romans 1:20 tell us, all people have clearly seen & perceived the eternal power & divine nature of God ever since creation of world through things God has made. So, like Pharaoh, everybody is without excuse. Though God's power & existence are clearly portrayed through creation, God's enemies today still deny His existence or fight against His laws and His ways, and because of their hardened hearts which been given over sinful ways, they don't believe will be hell to pay for going against God. But, God will gain glory for Himself when on Judgment Day He overthrows every power that sets itself against Him. Revelation 18:21 tells of how Satan & all God's enemies will be cast into the eternal lake fire, just as Pharaoh & all his hosts drowned midst of sea. And this will be for the glory of God because He will triumph over every form evil & then all saints in heaven will respond by glorifying God in song. As we read Revelation 19:1, the saints will sing, "Hallelujah! Salvation & glory & power belong to our God, for true & just are His judgments."

## **2. By Saving the Israelites**

Not only does God bring glory to Himself in this event by defeating Egyptians, He also gains glory for Himself by saving the Israelites. And we will see that God gains glory for Himself particularly because of how He saves them. He does so not by working alongside their efforts, nor by acquiescing to their requests for help. Rather, God alone saves them without any action on their part. In this way God gets all the glory. In order to do this, God leads the Israelites down a pathway that forces them to rely completely on Him. The Israelites had been heading away from Egypt, as was to be expected, but then God instructs them to turn back & encamp by sea (:1-2). Now, we may think that was a ridiculous directive, but God a reason for this. Not only will this make Pharaoh think Israelites are confused and lost and cause him to begin a pursuit that leads into their God-ordained judgment (:3), this would also lead the Israelites into a corner, so to speak. The Israelites will now be trapped. In front of them & along right side were mountains. To the left was the Red Sea. And behind them were the Egyptians. There was nothing they could do! There was nowhere to go! They could receive no help other than from the Lord. They had to surrender completely to God's care. But in such a situation, God could ensure that they know it is He alone who saves them, and thus He could ensure that He alone would get all the glory.

And that's just what happens here. Now that the Israelites are cornered on all sides & realize there is nothing they can do to save themselves, God will act to save them, & God will get all the glory. Moses tells the terrified people in v.13, "<sup>13</sup>Fear not, stand firm, & see the salvation of LORD, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup>The LORD will fight for you, & you have only to be silent" (:13-14). God will do all the acting. All the Israelites may do is be "silent." This is a verb that describes inaction. It means "be still," "make no moves." God is saying, "Do nothing. Just have faith in My Word. Stand back and watch Me take action." And that's just what happened. When the Israelites left Egypt, they were armed with weapons for battle (cf. Exodus 13:18b), but they did not use any of their weapons that they had with them! Rather, the Lord told Moses to raise his staff & stretch out his hand over the sea (:16). So Moses did as God said, and that night "<sup>21</sup>the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided, <sup>22</sup>and the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left" (:21-22). This was completely a work of God. There was no human contribution at all. A mighty east wind blew all night long, and by morning there was a pathway of dry land through middle sea. Water stood walled up on either side of a path through the midst of the sea. Now, to counter any objections that this was just marshy sea with only 12 inches of water, we can note that the Hebrew word used for "wall" in this passage is an architectural term which ordinarily refers to the walls of a city, so this wall of water was certainly a wall of substantial vertical height. Furthermore, Exodus 15:8 describes the waters as having "stood firm like wall" and it says the waters were congealed or solidified. We know, of course, that water does not naturally do this unless it's at zero degrees or below. So surely, this deliverance was a mighty work of God alone! In verses 29-30 we read that the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with wall of water on their right & on their left. And that day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians. God alone gained the victory! God's power alone saved them! Thus God gets all the glory.

Is that not how God saves us today? We cross over from eternal death to eternal life entirely through the work of God's appointed Mediator, Jesus Christ. There is nothing we can contribute to our salvation. There is nothing we can glory about in ourselves when we are saved, for it has nothing to do with our efforts. Ephesians 2:9 comes to mind: "[It is] by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." We may not boast in ourselves about the salvation we have received. The apostle Paul explicitly forbids any such boasting & reminds us to boast only in the Lord when he

says, “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). In this way, God gets all glory, & that's just what He deserves!

But there is something else which makes this salvation even more remarkable, something which brings even more glory to God. And that is the fact that, initially, the Israelites did not even want the salvation being offered to them, nor did they believe that God could save them. And yet, in spite of all this, God saved them. Look at verse 11. Once the Israelites saw the Egyptians approaching, they “feared greatly,” (:10) & cried out, “<sup>11</sup>Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?” This was an expression of unbelief. They don't believe that the Lord will save them. They think they're going to die in the wilderness. And then the Israelites continue with their complaints: “<sup>11b</sup>What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup>Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” Psalm 106:7 speaks of this response as rebellion. The Israelites are being delivered, but they are full of complaints because this deliverance involves going through the wilderness. And they are full of unbelief because they do not believe God would come good on His word & bring them all the way to the Promised Land of Canaan. In short, the Israelites are sinners who do not want God's salvation. And yet, in spite of all their doubts & reluctance勉强, God reaches out His mighty arm to save them. This is exactly what Paul speaks of in Romans 5:8 when he is talking about how God saves us: “While yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Even when we still in our sinful rebellion against God, even while we did not yet believe God's promises, Christ died for us. Isn't that marvelous? Doesn't that bring glory to God? He saves us & rescues us from judgment even when we sinners—even when we didn't want the rescue! That's what we call “irresistible grace.” And it's the same irresistible grace that the Israelites experienced here.

God did not wait for the Israelites to put their trust in Him before He would save them. If that was the case, they never would have been saved. No! God took initiative. First He saved them, and then, after the people saw their salvation accomplished, they feared the Lord & believed. Look at verse 30-31. “<sup>30</sup>Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup>Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so [as a result] the people feared LORD, & they believed in the LORD & in his servant Moses.” Before the Israelites had been saved, they complained & expressed unbelief. After they had been saved, they believed & as result glorified God. We see that in chapter 15 as Israelites respond by composing a song which glorifies God for the great salvation He gained for them. And in this song, all the glory goes to God alone. There is no boasting in themselves and what they did. No, they sing of how the Lord triumphed gloriously. And this is the proper response to salvation—praise & thanksgiving to God. But it is also a necessary response. It's what God expects & deserves from a people who know His saving work. If we know God's saving work in & through the blood of Jesus Christ, we must ask: Are we giving God the proper response He deserves? Are we singing songs of salvation in our hearts? Are we living our lives to the glory of His name?

## **Conclusion**

Dear Friends, we have seen that God gains glory for Himself both as He defeats His enemies, the Egyptians, and as He saves His chosen ones, the Israelites. And He continues to gain glory for Himself today, either by defeating His enemies, or by saving His chosen people. Where do you stand? As an enemy of God, or as a friend of God? How is God going to gain glory in & through your life? By defeating you in that eternal lake of fire on the great day of judgment? Or by saving you through the precious blood of Christ? If you are an unrepentant sinner who is not trusting in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins, then you are an enemy of God. You need to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, lest God gain glory through you by defeating and judging you. But, if you are trusting in Jesus Christ, then you are forgiven by His blood. Then you have been saved from the grip of sin & Satan, death and hell. Then God is already now gaining glory through your life as you live for Him and praise Him and thankfully serve Him each day. May it be that God would gain glory through the lives of each one of us as we live a life of thankful and continuous praise to God for the great salvation He has gained for us.