

GOD SAVES HIS PEOPLE

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God is the One who wins the victory for His people.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Exodus 13–15

+ **SETTING:**

The many years of cruel oppression the Hebrews experienced at the hand of a new Pharaoh were coming to an end. God had heard their cries and sent an unconventional deliverer with unconventional methods. There were no armies, but the outstretched hand of God rained down plague after plague upon the world's strongest and most confident superpower. The final blow—the death of the firstborn sons—brought Egypt to its knees, so Pharaoh commanded Israel to go. God's people were finally free, but still more opportunities for the Hebrews to trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lay ahead.

DAY 1

READ:

Exodus 13:1-19

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 13:17

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"We are on life's journey, and there are many dangers. We have a Guide who knows the road and can take us safely to our promised land—the New Jerusalem. God led the children of Israel by cloud and fire. In our time, God provides the Holy Spirit as the perfect guide to lead us. The cloud and fire to lead us on our journey is also the Bible. It is our compass to show us the way by night and day so that we will not lose our way."¹

—Africa Study Bible

The easy way, the well-traveled way, from Egypt to Canaan would go around, not through, the Red Sea. But God often doesn't allow us to take the way that makes the most sense to us at the time. Consider the hard and difficult paths God often led His servants to travel.

Abraham and Sarah would wait twenty-five years for God's promise of a child. Joseph would experience two decades of betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment before his dreams were fulfilled in leading and rescuing His family. Moses himself would spend forty long years in the wilderness before God called him to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. David would be chased by King Saul for years before he would rightfully assume the throne of Israel. The apostle Paul would endure hardships like stoning, imprisonment, and even a shipwreck for sharing the gospel.

Ultimately, Jesus set the perfect example we should follow. He didn't take the easy way out but accepted the cup of God's wrath and endured the cross so we could have salvation. Because He did this, and because we have His Holy Spirit with us to strengthen us, we can endure our own long roads, follow our paths through difficult waters, and bear our own crosses.

The Christian life is one that often takes us not around but through hardship and trial. We can endure because we know that the God of Israel, whose outstretched hand delivered His people, is the same God who empowers us today. We can go through, not simply around, the valley of the shadow of death because He is with us and He comforts us (see Ps. 23).

What paths in your life are difficult to endure right now? How does the faithfulness of God help you to keep going?

DAY 2

READ:

Exodus 13:20-22

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 13:21-22

NOTES

Imagine being Israel in this moment. They had been enslaved for hundreds of years, kept in grueling servitude, and exploited for free labor. Then God acted mightily in raining down plague after plague on the most powerful nation on earth. Now the Hebrews were getting their wish—freedom from Pharaoh’s grasp; freedom to be their own people.

But where would they go, and how would they go? They knew they belonged in Canaan, the promised land, but how would they make that journey? The short answer was the God who freed them.

God demonstrated His presence with His people by guiding them during the day with a massive cloud and with a pillar of fire at night. Imagine this! The tangible, awesome presence of God going before you, leading the way.

And yet, though we don’t physically see a pillar of fire and cloud today, God’s presence does guide us in an even more direct and personal way—through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

If it were hard for us to imagine a literal pillar of cloud and fire leading Israel out of Egypt, it would be harder for the Hebrews to imagine God in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And yet, this is what every single Christian experiences. Upon salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God indwells you and empowers you and equips you to obey the voice of God and go where He leads.

Why might we wish for a pillar of cloud and fire to lead us? What does this say about our understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in the lives of believers?

DAY 3

READ:

Exodus 14:1-14

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 14:13-14

NOTES

The Hebrews were pinned against the Red Sea and the approaching army of Egypt. They had nowhere to go. It's easy for us to read Exodus from the comfort of a padded chair in an air-conditioned building, sipping a perfectly brewed cup of coffee. But we need to put ourselves in the sandals of the Israelites who were staring at danger on every side.

Crossing a large body of water was impossible. Perhaps some could swim, but could they hope to reach the other side with their families and all of their possessions? No.

Similarly, defeating the mightiest nation on earth, who rode with the weapons of war, was impossible. A ragtag, untrained, undisciplined army wouldn't stand a chance.

So the voices of complaint and criticism began: "Did we make a mistake? What was Moses thinking? Maybe we should go back to Egypt?"

Back to Egypt? Where they'd been under the thumb of Pharaoh, where their lives were not worth anything? But in the midst of their despair, they forgot who was with them—the great "I AM." On their own, from a human perspective, their situation was impossible, even tragic. Nothing, however, is impossible with God. This is why Moses told them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

Standing still is the hard part. We want to fight and claw and act and push. But when our backs are against the Red Sea and we face an overwhelming enemy, the only weapon we have is the greatest weapon we own: our faith in the sovereign Lord of creation.

What impossible situation are you facing today? How does the all-powerful God help you to stand in faith?

DAY 4

READ:

Exodus 14:15-22

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 14:21

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #33: MIRACLES

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

Imagine being Moses in this moment. He had seen God appear in a burning bush. He had seen God act powerfully, humiliating the most powerful nation on earth with a series of plagues designed to show the futility of their false worship. And now the Lord commanded Moses to lift up his staff and stretch out his hand over the Red Sea.

Let's stop for a moment and think about the previous times Moses stretched out his arm at the Lord's command. At the burning bush, God turned Moses' rod into a snake and commanded Moses to stretch out his hand to pick it up by the tail, the most dangerous place to grab a snake. But in that moment, the snake became a staff once more. Furthermore, through Moses' outstretched hand, God brought hail, locusts, and darkness upon Egypt. Yet these small miracles would be but a foretaste of the hand of God through Moses in this moment.

In response to a raised staff and a human hand, both stretched out in faith, the Lord of creation peeled back the sea, creating a dry pathway for Israel to cross over an impossible natural boundary. There have been a lot of attempts to explain this, but the only way to see it rightly is that God temporarily suspended His own laws of creation on behalf of His people. It was a miracle. Yet even this mighty miracle was but a foretaste of the greatest miracle that would come, when God stretched forth His hand and raised Jesus from the dead.

What should our responses be to the miraculous and mighty acts of God?

DAY 5

READ:

Exodus 14:21–15:21

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Exodus 14:22

NOTES

Imagine what it must have been like taking that first non-soggy step into the sea, to see walls of water on both sides! After centuries of oppression, Israel could now only see Egypt in their rearview mirror as they left behind a great and fearful weight. God's mighty hand pulled back the waters, and His breath blew a wind that provided a dry pathway for them to walk forward toward salvation.

This would be one of the defining moments for the people of Israel. If you read the rest of the Old Testament, you can underline in your Bible hundreds of passages that reference the crossing of the Red Sea and the Israelites' miraculous escape from Egypt. And as hard as it is to believe, this monumental miracle was only a foretaste of an even greater rescue to come—one that accomplishes our own salvation.

One day, another son of Israel would escape from "Egypt," crossing over the waters of death and leading His people to salvation. Just as God led Israel to the promised land, so today, God is leading believers home to eternal life with Him.

Jesus has made a way for sinners to be restored to their loving Creator, a path through sin and death and brokenness. But there is only one way to escape the waters of eternal judgment, to be wrested from the grasp of sin and Satan. Jesus declared Himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life"; no one comes to the Father except through faith in Him (John 14:6).

How does the exodus of the Hebrews compare and contrast to Jesus' rescue of sinners?

GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

Start		Finish
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POINT 1: God directs His people (Ex. 13:17-22).

God led His people out of Egypt but took them on an unconventional pathway. The _____ way was a _____ measure and an opportunity to strengthen the Israelites' _____.

? How have you seen God work in your life through a difficult path to bring about your good?

God led the Israelites with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, a visual reminder of His _____, _____, and _____.

? What are some ways God leads us as believers today?

POINT 2: God fights for His people (Ex. 14:10-14,19-20).

The Israelites blamed Moses, and God, for their predicament, but God remained in _____. They only needed to _____ still because God would _____ for them.

? Why might we find it difficult to stand still and wait for the Lord's salvation?

The Lord _____ the Israelites. Through the same cloud, He gave _____ to His people and covered His enemies in _____.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Even when things seem to be going wrong, they just could be going right because when you're in God's will, the negatives are part of his positive program."²

-Tony Evans

POINT 3: God delivers His people

(Ex. 14:21-22,26-31).

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #33: MIRACLES

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His _____ and/or validating His _____. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be _____ and _____ involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

Through _____, God performed a great miracle to deliver His people. Through _____, God secured an even greater rescue—salvation from sin.



How does the crossing of the Red Sea compare to our salvation through faith in Jesus?

MY RESPONSE

Because we have been delivered from sin through Jesus, we worship Him at all times, showing others that God is of utmost worth so that they too might be compelled to trust in Christ and be saved from their sin.

- **HEAD:** What are some mighty acts of God that you can worship God for this week?
- **HEART:** What are some ways you doubt God's providence in your daily life?
- **HANDS:** With whom will you share the gospel of Jesus, about the hope of salvation from sin?

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"You are not saved because of the quality of your faith. You are saved because of the *object* of your faith: the Redeemer, the God who is fighting for you. Everything about this text says, 'Grace, grace, grace, grace' ... When you try to add to God's salvation, you subtract. If you try to merit God's salvation, you haven't believed in God at all; you are trusting yourself, even if you try to do only a little bit."⁵

-Tim Keller