

Moses' Song (Hogmanay)

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[0 : 00] on the mountain of your inheritance, the place, O Lord, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established. The Lord will reign forever and ever.

So far the reading of God's word. Well, this song of Moses, this song of the sea, is at the very center of the book of Exodus.

But more than that, brothers and sisters, it is really basically the national anthem of God's people, of Israel. It's a triumphant celebration of the defining event of her history.

And so because of the work of our Savior who has grafted us onto that vine, it too is a song about the defining event of our history. And as we think about the end of this calendar year and the beginning of 2024, it's good for us to think about defining events, foundational truths.

It's always helpful to go back to the very basics. And so that's what we want to do here. As we see in Exodus 15, this is a great song of doxology, which means a song of thanksgiving and praise to God.

[1 : 18] And the redeemed sang it in the past. And as we will see, God's people will sing it in the future. And we sing it today.

It's a choir practice for eternity. Most of you will remember the story of the Exodus, of course, but we want to just recap it here briefly. Moses has appealed to Pharaoh to let God's people go. Let them go in the name of God, in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. But Pharaoh refuses. His heart grows hard.

And at each point, each appeal and then refusal, God sends a plague to further harden the heart of Pharaoh. And these plagues are, in fact, contests with the Egyptian gods, battles in which the true God mocks the false gods of the Egyptian pantheon.

We sort of see that, for example, Hapi, the god of the Nile, is slain, as it were, as the river is turned to blood. Amen-Ra is the great sun god, slain, as it were, when the land is plunged into darkness.

[2 : 33] And so, in each plague here, God is announcing, I am the Lord, not Pharaoh, but Yahweh.

Yahweh alone is King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no pretender to my throne. Blood is then put on the doorposts, and all who have that blood on the doorposts are saved, as the avenging angel passes over the houses of Israel.

And we see from the beginning, then, already biblical religion is bloody. It's a religion of the cross. Egypt's firstborn are devoted to God in destruction, whereas Israel, the firstborn of Yahweh, is devoted to deliverance.

And finally, with Pharaoh's permission, then, Israel begins to move out. After centuries of slavery, perhaps a million adults, some three to five million Hebrews in total.

We'll pick up the story reading, then, from Exodus 14, verse 10. When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians...

[3 : 54] the Bohemian and all the Christians, the one who died of living by the monster.

Hallelujah. By the time ■■ that may benel. And there we both try to give some av particle their history. It's been a beautiful awesome update where people can make me davon respond to this story and vote the Claricides that we have ■■■■■ 45, where we can make it great Australia.

And right ■■■ radio the country in the industry which is trying to see the results of America's right now. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 54] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. When you read the text, they have to be dragged out of Egypt, remarkably. No one comes to the Father unless he draws him, and that's true here as well. Despite all that Israel has already seen God do in the plagues, Israel is much more impressed with the Egyptian hosts, with Pharaoh in the lead chariot leading his army than it is with its own God. [8 : 50] And again, sight, and again, sight anticipates the promise of salvation. Here's the promise of God has pushed the situation to the brink.

God has pushed the situation so far in this contest between himself and the false gods of Egypt that there is no hope for Israel unless Israel gets out of the way so that God can do something. And he does. And he does. In the midst of judgment, the judgment that God sends against Egypt, there is grace for Israel. Despite all of the groaning, the complaining, the grumbling, all of the failures of God's people, we read in chapter 14, verse 19, the angel of the Lord will be Israel's guide.

You know, this is no angel in the typical sense, though. This angel of the Lord, identified here and at various places in the Old Testament, is in fact the pre-incarnate Christ.

This angel of the Lord is in fact Yahweh himself. There's also the pillar of cloud and of fire in the story, which is a reference to the Holy Spirit, as a number of passages confirm for us.

[10 : 16] This is Deuteronomy 32 or Isaiah 63 or Haggai 2 or Nehemiah 9 and others as well. This glory cloud of the Exodus is in fact the Holy Spirit who shelters his people through the sea like an eagle spreading its wings.

The same glory spirit who hovers over the face of the waters in Genesis 1, who on the other side of this Exodus, which is a kind of creation event, hovers over Israel throughout its wanderings in the wilderness to bring them into the land of promise.

And it's also this Holy Spirit who will later fill the temple wrapped in the glory cloud, the presence of God. And while one day this angel of the Lord would be clothed in our flesh, hiding his glory in our humanity.

What you see here then is a wonderful picture. Our triune God is at work in the Exodus. I don't know if you often think about that. The Father reigning in heaven with the pre-incarnate Christ leading his troops just as Pharaoh is leading his own forces.

And the pillar of cloud and fire, the presence of the Holy Spirit to lead the people when they've been delivered from Pharaoh's hand. You see, wherever Yahweh appears, this angel of the Lord, this pillar of cloud and fire, wherever God appears, there is judgment and deliverance.

[11 : 56] And here on earth, Moses is commissioned to represent God in heaven. And as long as Moses holds his hands up, keeps his hands raised, the seas divide.

And a wall of water is formed on both sides. And there is dry land for the Israelites to pass through. And then the Holy Spirit comes and puts wheel clamps on all of the chariots. He jams the spokes so they can't move. The Egyptians are confused.

They're fearful. They panic. All that they can do is say, let us flee for Yahweh. The God of Israel fights for Israel against us.

But again, Israel too is panicking and confused and fearful. And you can just imagine them watching. Wait, wait, why are they leaving? We haven't done anything.

[12 : 59] No, God has done something. They're terrified of him. They're fleeing Yahweh. God has done it. God has acted. All of this sets the stage then.

We have this great song of Moses after this event. This song of the sea in Exodus 15. Divided basically into two parts. Exodus, first of all.

Exodus 15. And then the march of God's people towards Sinai and finally Canaan. Exodus and then settlement in the promised land.

Verses 1 through 8 give us the event of the Exodus in poetry. In song. Now singing the mighty deeds of God into the very hearts of God's people.

This is why we sing the mighty deeds of God today. So that we sing them into our hearts. And even the elements of creation here are included in that triumph.

[14 : 00] The depths of the sea are witnesses to what God has done. The victory that he has achieved. It's not a song at all about Moses or even about Israel.

It's a song about the God of Israel. It's a song about Yahweh who has triumphed. Who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Who stretches out, the song says, his right arm to achieve victory for his people.

That right arm is the Lord Jesus Christ. Described as the right hand of God who secures victory. As Psalm 118 puts it, echoing this song.

There are sounds of joyful singing. The right hand of the Lord performs valiantly. Then as many have pointed out after this, you have a kind of call and response in the Song of the Sea.

It's antiphonal. It's if you've ever watched a musical or seen an opera. You have characters singing their lines, their chorus.

[15:07] And then their antagonist sings their line, their chorus. That's what goes on here. The enemy chorus. Pharaoh and his army have their lines.

Verse 9. The enemy said, I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword.

My hand shall destroy them. Then we have the other chorus. The chorus of Israel singing to God.

Verse 10.

What a line. You blew with your breath. Breath here. The Hebrew word ruach can be translated spirit.

You blew with your spirit. You see the spirit, by the way, loves to dabble with water. In creation, in the Exodus, in baptism, as we'll see, you blew with your spirit.

[16:09] The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. For all of the pride, the pomp, the pageantry of Pharaoh leading the greatest army in the ancient world.

What's the picture here? God simply blows them over with his breath. You see the sarcasm. You see God's humor. I'll just topple him with a breath of air.

Verse 11. Who's like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who's like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

You stretched out your right hand, and the earth swallowed them. Well, all of the emphasis on the song is on what God has done. The victory that God has wrought.

What he has achieved over the proud boasts of Pharaoh and his army. And so, too, over the serpent and his hosts. That's the first part of the song. Then, secondly, we have the march.

[17:09] The march towards Canaan. The nations have heard. The peoples have heard, we read, verses 14 and 15. The inhabitants of Philistia and Edom and Moab.

God has gained a great victory here, and the word is getting out. You know, people are reading the newspaper. News of this terrifying God of majesty and power.

The God who does wonders. The God who comes in judgment and delivers his people. And then this song continues, showing us that Exodus is, in fact, not just departure, leaving Egypt.

But, in fact, it's the first leg of a new itinerary. Of arrival in the land of Canaan. The land of promise. A new garden.

A new garden. A better garden. One flowing with milk and honey. The goal of all of it is expressed at the end of the song. Verse 17. You will bring them in and plant them on your mountain.

[18:16] The place, Lord, you've made for your sanctuary, which your hands established. And we know that God's people, Israel, do arrive on that mountain.

In that land, they march from Egypt to Sinai. Mount Sinai, where a marriage takes place. Between God and Israel in the desert.

But Mount Sinai is only a way station. A temporary pit stop on the pilgrimage to another mountain. Mount Zion. Jerusalem. That is the entire goal of the people in the Exodus.

So that they can worship their God with him in the land. And in Deuteronomy 32, verse 44, we have reference again to this song of Moses.

The song of the sea. This time, spoken by Joshua. Who leads the people after Moses. Across another body of water. The river Jordan.

[19:15] To plant them in that land. And the song of the sea, then, of departure from Egypt. And of journeying to Sinai and Zion. To be planted on the mountain of God.

In the land of promise. Continues. It echoes. Again and again throughout the scriptures. It fills the Psalms. In double pairs.

Psalms 77. Which we sang in 78. And Psalm 105 and 106. Among many other Psalms. This song of Moses is picked up.

It's sung again by God's people. Albeit with sad irony. God was gracious to Israel. God worked miracles with ease against her enemies.

He continued to bless his people. He set them into the land of promise. And then Israel grew unfaithful to the Lord. They became like the enemy nations.

[20 : 14] That they were to drive out. Well, that's the pull of their hearts. Isn't that too often? The pull of our hearts. To drift. To forget.

To forget. To forget. To forget the absolute claim of God as our covenant Lord over us.

And so we read in Hosea 6. Like Adam, Israel broke my covenant. God says. Though I was a husband to her. And she is exiled.

Carried away into captivity. And Psalm 78. Thinking of this. Says. Despite all of God's provision. They sinned and did not believe his wonders.

But thinking of that song of the sea in the Psalter. That same passage continues. The Lord is compassionate. He covers iniquity.

[21 : 14] He is faithful. When we are unfaithful. What he has done in the past. He will do again in the present. And in the future. You see, Israel continues to fail.

Yet God himself will again come down to deliver them. Stooping even further this time. Not just in the pre-incarnate Christ. But in God the Son taking on our flesh.

He will descend. He will do it to deliver his people. Because there's no one else to do it. No one else who's perfect in obedience.

He will cleanse the land. He will deliver Israel. He will bring them into that Sabbath rest. It's a great victory that he will achieve.

As Exodus 15.3 says. Yahweh is a warrior. Isaiah 59. Isaiah 59. Picking up this theme. Declares.

[22 : 11] His own arm brings salvation. He puts on righteousness as a breastplate. The helmet of salvation is on his head. He puts on garments of vengeance for clothing.

He wraps himself in zeal as a cloak. For he will cause a redeemer to come out of Zion. Then we read in Isaiah chapter 11.

The Lord will devote to destruction all the tongues of the sea of Egypt. He will wave his hand over the river with his scorching breath. His spirit.

He'll lead his people across with dry feet. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of his people. As there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

There will be a remnant in that day even greater than all of the people of Israel who left Egypt in the Exodus. And we know that there was a return of exiles from captivity.

[23 : 14] Which looks like another Exodus at first glance. But when you read through the prophets. When you read through Ezra and Nehemiah. You quickly realize that this falls far short of the glory of that second Exodus that has been promised.

There still is to come a greater Exodus. A greater land of promise that awaits. But the scriptures reveal to us that in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ we find that true Exodus.

The one in whom there is salvation through judgment and mercy. In Luke chapter 4 and chapter 9.

In Luke chapter 4 and chapter 9. Jesus declares to us how he has come to provide a new Exodus.

That will result in release from the bondage of Satan. The serpent. Freedom from the curse of death. So that his people at last can arrive.

God can come to that promised land. Can enter into that glorious rest. Can receive all of the inheritance that is theirs in him. And so worship God truly and fully in his presence.

[24 : 26] And just like in Exodus 15. The song of the sea. Creation itself bears witness to this deliverance in Jesus Christ. Doesn't it?

We know in the death of Christ. The earth was plunged into darkness. In Joel 2. Speaking of Pentecost.

We read, I will show wonders in the heavens, the Lord says. And in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness. The moon into blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

And so too Jesus tells us. In Matthew 24. In those last days, he says, The sun shall be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from heaven. The powers of the heavens will be shaken. For they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds. With power. With great glory. For the sun shall be taken.

[25 : 25] Just watch God deliver his people. He alone brings judgment and deliverance. And for all who rest in that work of Jesus Christ.

It's the resurrection that is the final exodus. Exodus, when our Savior, the firstborn from the dead, has now crossed over into that promised land.

And he's gone there, he tells us, to prepare a place for us. And he won't fail to bring us with him.

The Apostle Paul has all this in mind when he reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10 that Israel's identification with Moses is a type of our identification with Jesus Christ.

He says, Israel was baptized into Moses in the Red Sea, so too are we baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, they walked through the tsunami waters of God's judgment on dry land. And so too, Christ endured the waters of judgment, as it were, on the cross, bearing God's wrath against sin for us.

And he came out alive on the other side. And then he created a wall. A wall emerges on both sides as Christ lifts up his hands in salvation and deliverance, interceding at the right hand of the Father. And we walk through on dry ground. Baptism then corresponds not only to circumcision, but to the Exodus. These same waters of judgment can bring salvation for others. A passageway is opened either to Zion or to a watery grave. For all who embrace the promise, it's saving. But for all who reject it, it brings only condemnation.

[27 : 28] And we see this too with Noah and the ark. And then the Apostle Peter. The Apostle Peter has this same song very much in mind in 1 Peter, alluding over and over to the Exodus when he says, baptism saves you. Not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the one who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities and powers subject to him. It's the angel of the Lord who fights for his people, who took on human flesh and won victory for all of his people, who crushed the serpent's head, who enters the gates of Jerusalem as the conqueror. And through our waters of union with him, we too escape judgment.

The final episode that draws all of this to a close comes to us in Revelation, the book of the Revelation chapter 15, where the song of the sea, the song of Moses, is sung once more, this time in the heavenly courtroom. In Revelation, we have, of course, plagues, many plagues after which the angel comes announcing the establishment of God, very much like the plagues of God in Egypt, after which the kingdom of God, as it were, is established, first at Mount Sinai and then more fully in the land. Satan is expelled from heaven, just as Pharaoh has been expelled from the earth. And now Satan is seeking out the church to persecute it because he knows his time is short. But you see, the outcome of the battle is guaranteed.

And so in Revelation 15, we read, I saw another great and marvelous sign in heaven, seven angels with seven final plagues with which the wrath of God is completed.

And then I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, beside which stood those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name. Here you see the violent Red Sea has been turned into a tranquil sea of glass.

They were holding harps from God. They sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb. Great and wonderful are your works, O Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.

[30 : 09] Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All the nations shall come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

You see, the God of the Exodus, the angel of the Lord incarnate, now in the flesh has passed through those waters of judgment.

He has arrived victorious in the true and greater Canaan. He has rightly claimed the prize of salvation, the promised land in the new heavens and new earth, everlasting Sabbath rest.

And now here, before the throne of God, this joyful singing of the song of Moses, the song of the sea, becomes also the song of the Lamb, the Lord who became servant in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Well, this is a great defining event for us, isn't it, loved ones? We are to marvel at who our God is.

Our entire theology is to be Eucharistic, which means filled with thanksgiving, filled with gratitude and praise for who our God is, for all that he's done for us, all that he is doing for us, all that he shall do for us.

[31 : 33] I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he's thrown into the sea. This is my God, and I will praise him.

My Father's God, and I will exalt him. May this be the song in our hearts, both today and for all of the new year. Let's pray.

Lord our God, our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are indeed King of kings and great Lord of lords, that all of the little kingdoms, all of the pretenders of this world, shall be knocked down someday.

We know that they shall bow before you as you bring in by your spirit the kingdom of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that in him you still bring your people through waters from death to life, as you have always done.

We pray that you would give us hearts then that trust in you, that sing your praise, that are eager to take on our lips this song of the sea, and so delight in you.

[32 : 50] Help us then, Lord, having been filled with a wonderful picture of who you are, to go out into our callings in the world with greater wonder, greater astonishment, greater amazement, not only with your power, but with your love, with your provision, with your deliverance.

Make us a grateful people, we pray. Hear us, for we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. Our final song of praise is, I gather, perhaps a new hymn to many of us here, one written by John Newton, who of course wrote Amazing Grace, and many other wonderful hymns.

Let us love and sing and wonder. Let us praise the Savior's name. So if you'd please stand and we'll sing together. Let us love and sing and wonder. Let us praise the Savior's name.

He has hushed the Lord. He has hushed the Lord. He has quenched Mount Sinai's flame.

He has washed us with his blood. He has brought us nigh to God.

[34 : 32] Let us love the Lord who bought us, pitied us when enemies.

Called us by his grace and taught us, gave us ears and gave us sighs.

He has washed us with his blood. He presents our souls to God.

Let us sing, though fierce temptation threaten hard to bear us down.

For the Lord our strong salvation holds in view the conqueror's crown.

[35 : 40] He who washed us with his blood soon will bring us home to God.

Let us wonder grace and justice join and point to mercy's shore.

When through grace in Christ our trust is, justice smiles and acts no more.

He who washed us with our blood has secured our way to God.

Let us praise and join the chorus of the saints enthroned on high.

[36 : 50] Here they trusted him before us. Now their praises fill the sky.

You have washed us with your blood. You are worthy, Lamb of God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.