

Celebration and Certainty

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[0 : 0 0] time this evening to the passage we read in exodus exodus chapter 15 and we're looking at these verses 1 to 21 and not looking at every detail but some of the main strands of teaching in it if we take verse 11 to be equivalent to an unopened parcel who is like you oh lord among the gods who is like you majestic in holiness awesome and glorious deeds doing wonders we can then see the verses around that beginning from the beginning of the chapter through to where we finished as the unpacking of that parcel contents if you like of what's stated in verse 11 the wonder of god majestic in his holiness as he was seen in the various details that are described there throughout the chapter the awesomeness of god in glorious deeds especially as he gave the people of israel to be released from egypt to be redeemed from egypt and to come to the promised land ultimately as he would take them into so there's the unpacking if you like of that parcel in verse 11 the rest of it there just lies around it arranged in such a way that you can see content to some degree of what verse 11 actually contains and there are two things anyway in summary of that that we can look at with a number of points under each of these first of all there's a celebration in looking back this is a song of moses and the people of israel at this juncture so they're celebrating as they're looking back they're celebrating their release their deliverance they're celebrating god's magnificent victory over their enemies it's a celebration as they look back but also from verse 13 especially it's a certainty as they look ahead there is a certainty in the language there's a certainty as they reflect on the past that feeds into the future as it will unfold before them and there's a confidence in what they say in this song to the lord that because god has done such great things in the redemption from egypt he will go on providing for them until they are settled in the land that he has promised them so these are the two main points that i want to just lay before you first of all a celebration in looking back and then there's certainly a certainty in looking ahead and we can relate these to our own experience as christians in the world and as we look back over what god has done as we've experienced god's deliverance from sin deliverance from our own lost condition so that gives us encouragement to look forward to know that god and be certain that god having done what he's done in our past is actually going to complete in our future what he has promised to do for us now there's a principle here that's somewhat difficult to deal with and that's the principle of actually singing this song at such a juncture and over such a specific issue how could it be that the people of israel founded right in their hearts to sing this song which contains so much emphasis about the destruction of their enemies the egyptians how could they actually have over such a solemn thing as the destruction of the egyptians or the egyptian forces in the red sea how could they then move immediately to sing such a song or to sing at all in the light of that solemn event of destruction well you find some other parts of the bible where very similar things take place let me just take your minds forward in the bible to the last book of the bible and you'll find revelation chapter 15

and verse 3 they sang there when they saw this great sign in heaven where the wrath of god is finished this is the land the lord who had conquered the beast and his image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass and he sang the song of moses the servant of god and the song of the lamb saying great and amazing are your deeds o lord god almighty just and true are your ways o king of the nations who will not fear o lord and glorify your name for you alone are holy all nations will come and worship you for your righteous acts have been revealed and then even further forward even more remarkable in chapter 19 of revelation from the beginning of the chapter this is uh following on from the overthrow of babylon the great enemy represented by babylon by the word and uh the the history of of babylon as as the main enemy of the people of god through the old testament well babylon is overthrown and uh she's thrown into the sea it's a picture of utter destruction of god's enemies but then you find this um where after this i heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying hallelujah salvation and glory and power belong to our god for his judgments are true and just for he has judged the great prostitute to corrupt the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants once more they cried out hallelujah the smoke from her goes up forever and ever now that's talking about eternal destruction a most solemn thing to think about and yet it's there as something that's celebrated in song just as here in this chapter in exodus the overthrow of the egyptians is celebrated in song well how can that be well some theologians refer to this as intrusion ethics or intrusion teaching when what they mean by that is that the final state after the judgment after god's people have been settled with them forever in eternity then the minds of god's redeemed people will perfectly reflect the mind of god himself and where god finds it just and proper and fitting to deal with his enemies and their enemies in the way he will then because the minds of his people are very much in tune with perfectly in tune with his will with his purpose with his act of destruction in regard to the wicked they themselves follow in the same way or similar way in which you find here in exodus 15 and in the book of revelation to sing praise to the lord for the way that he has manifested his power towards them in their deliverance carrying with it the destruction of their enemies of their enemies as well the ultimate purpose of our redemption is praise to god the ultimate purpose of our redemption is praise to god and every aspect of our experiencing of redemption should reflect the praise of god what we do and what we say and how we sing and in this chapter that's what we find this this principle of celebrating of singing the praises of god who in his wisdom and power and majesty and holiness and might has dealt with his enemies and set his people free and that's going to be your experience and my experience fully and perfectly in the state of glory we can't get it into our minds it seems inappropriate in our present state of thinking it seems inappropriate because we are commanded to pray for our enemies to love those who despise us

and that is not in any way shifted from the emphasis Jesus gives to it by anything that's projected from what the future will be into consideration of it in the present it's still the case though that this is how the final order will be this when we are our minds are made perfect and in tune with the mind of God then what you find here will be brought to its own perfection and the celebrations of heaven itself and the God who is praised and the God who is praised as described in various ways down through the chapter verse 11 here who is like you oh Lord among the gods who is like you majestic in holiness now all the elements that God has revealed all the attributes all the ways in which has revealed himself in delivering Israel from Egypt and all the way through from there into the present day everything that God does is marked by holiness whether it's in the deliverance of his people his love for his people his overthrow of their enemies every aspect of his work is like his being glorious in holiness is not just a holy God is not just the holy God he is the most magnificent holy God magnificent in his holiness splendid in his holiness and that's why we always need to keep before our minds that the God we worship is splendid as it says he is majestic in holiness perhaps one of the reasons why things are sometimes with ourselves personally speaking as they are in our relationship with God our relationship with the world our view of the world and all those things that are that are involved in that that we don't appreciate as we should the majesty of God and his holiness the majestic holiness of God and the way in which God in his majestic holiness makes it clear to us in that itself how worthy he is to be worshipped how worthy he is to be served how worthy he is to be praised how worthy he is of everything that comes his way from his redeemed church tonight as we gather here in this meeting for prayer for study of the Bible for the praise of God this is what is before us we are here to worship the majestic God the God majestic in his holiness we are here not to cringe before him but we are here to fall before him in love and what the Bible calls the fear of God fear of God being a respect and an awe of the majestic holiness of God or the majestic God in his holiness yes but secondly you have an emphasis here in celebration of looking back not just the majestic holiness of God but also the power of God there it is in verse 11 awesome in glorious deeds or actions doing wonders go back to verse 3 the Lord is a man of war the Lord is his name of course you've got to bear in context in mind the context for this some of those who would criticize us for believing the Bible and who would suggest that perhaps a Christian religion is responsible for much of the damage that's in the world would point to verses like that and say the Lord is a man of war isn't your God one who delights in killing people one who delights in doing things which really cause pain and distress to people well I hope we know how to answer that first of all the context here the Lord is facing those who are willingly and uh not just willingly but violently his enemies and the enemies of his people what is God going to do well you might say God could have converted all of us really he could but that's not his purpose and you fall into line with his purpose whatever that purpose may be

and however difficult it may be for us to follow it he is god he knows what's right he knows what he's doing at all times and you notice here the right hand of god is mentioned you stretched out your right hand the earth swallowed them now um apparently it was the case that representations of pagan idols very often had in the right hand a symbol of their power whether it be a sword or a crown or something like that they were represented by the images of them as having this capacity this power this ability this overriding power and influence over those who came to worship them and over those uh that they were represented to to protect wrongly of course but here is god and here is the song of of triumph to god you stretched out your right hand their right hand whatever they had on their right hand was pretty useless when it came to the matter of facing you oh lord because you stretched out your right hand the right hand of your might and there's also uh an emphasis here to to floods um the earth swallowed them but uh all the way through you've got emphasis on on on floods uh here through the red sea of course being itself uh a volume of water look back to verse 5 uh the floods covered them they went down into the depth like a stone now this is a really interesting thing for you yourselves to to pursue through i'm just going to lay it out you can follow this out yourselves especially if you've got a concordance just look up the word floods and look at the number of times that the word floods is used in a similar way to this because floods especially in the old testament represent the powers of enmity against god the powers of those who gather together against the lord's people and against god himself and who gather in all the might that they can muster in order to try and prevent the lord from carrying out his purpose and again you find that same thing uh through the bible but you find it very frequently and interestingly significantly in the book of psalms book of psalms that we of course use in our worship psalm 29 verse 3 the voice of the lord is over the waters the glory of god thunders the lord over many waters the voice of the lord is powerful the voice of the lord is full of majesty go to psalm 77 and there again you find in psalm 77 a similar emphasis in verses 16 in verse 16 there you find when the water saw you oh god when the water saw you they were afraid indeed the deep trembled you'll find for yourselves other i'll read one more than that in the book of psalms there are many more that you can find out for yourselves it's a very useful interesting exercise to do that and to follow out the teaching there of the waters and what they represent and how the lord overcame them on behalf of his people well psalm 124 one of the all-time favourite psalms of the covenanters in scotland well i'm sure know what that terrible situation was like for the covenanters having to meet sometimes in secret of the moors on the moors pursued by red coat soldiers and so on this was one of their favourite psalms and it's for good reason you can see why it was one of the favourite psalms if it had not been the lord who was on our side let israel now say if it had not been the lord who was on our side then when people rose up against us then they would have swallowed us alive when their anger was kindled against us then the flood would have swept us away the torrent would have gone over us then over us would have gone the raging waters see three references there to the power of the waters the power of the floods

and all the time there's an emphasis god has not given us to that god has overcome that god has delivered his people and of course you find the same in the red sea this was what stood in the face of the people moving forward and the lord showed his might that these great waters that were sometimes used to represent this body of enmity against god he just cut it in two and let his people pass through now all of that follows through into your experience as well as the people of god because you can see it in your own personal experience how waters so very readily represent the various aspects of the difficulties and the trials and the challenges that face you in the christian life and how so often they seem to be just ready to overthrow you overwhelm you and come and just swallow you up well there's the emphasis all the way through scripture your trust in the lord unites you to someone who stands over the waters who presides over them in such a way that they will not swallow you up even though sometimes they may seem to come very far up in your experience and then of course he refers to his love and his fury and they're both together here interesting in verse 13 you have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode and he mentions the fury of the lord elsewhere and the anger with which god dealt with his enemies well verse 13 the steadfast love of the lord is his loving kindness to his people so often we come across this word in the old testament but there's one thing that it carries with it as well and it's important because alongside of god's steadfast love for his people and these words are important as a translation loving kindness or steadfast love it really means the absolute commitment of god to his people and to his own purpose in them and through them and for them but his own absolute commitment to that means that his enemies are bound to be overthrown the loving kindness of god for his people the steadfast love of god for his people carries with it inevitably the destruction of all those who themselves choose willingly to stand against him and against his people and all of that is brought before us by way of a song for worship love is committed to god's people and the love in which he's committed to his people also carries with it the way in which he engages with his enemies who steadfastly refuse to bow to him you see there in 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 the sword my hand shall destroy them there's a reflection of the society in which you and i live just as these waters of the red sea represented us the floods of waters that which stood against god and his people so you're finding that in verse 9 the emphasis there very much fits in with the attitude that faces you today as a christian where the world and where in many aspects of political life itself and many other aspects of our society sadly they will say i will pursue i will overtake i'll follow my own inclinations i'll pull through with this i will actually be determined against what is represented as god and the gospel and the church i'll stand against that i'll overthrow that i'll deal with that and sadly

[20 : 08] throughout the world that of course is the case you've only got to look to ukraine and see someone like putin who is determined that his own will will carry as far as the future of the ukrainian people is concerned well god may very well have other ideas and we hope that it will turn out eventually to be a defeat for a dictator like putin but there is the emphasis there in verse 9 and here is god saying here are my people and they are celebrating the victory that i have given them because here's their song over the destruction of their enemies here's their celebration of the majestic holiness the power the love and the fury of god this is our god as we sang one of the songs and psalms tonight this is our god the god we worship the god we love the god we pray to the god we seek to show his power again now there's a certainty of looking ahead the time is going certainly in looking ahead from verse 13 there's a certain hope involved in this you have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode it's as if the people are there already in the promised land the peoples have heard they tremble you see that certain hope how is it that they can be so sure about the future as they reflect on the past well because of arguing this way i think they're saying really god has already done this for us so we are right in thinking and believing that he's going to continue to bless us and to carry us through until he has actually settled us in the promised land it's really an argument from the most difficult if you like though nothing is difficult with god but in human terms an argument from the greatest to the least or an argument from the most difficult to the more easy the most difficult being to deliver the people from their thralldom and bondage in egypt and to carry them safely through having been pursued by the egyptians that you might say is the way the song here reflects on the most difficult aspect of their deliverance and what it's really saying is when god has already done this we can be certain that he will do the lesser for us and carrying us through the wilderness into the promised land that's of course speaking relatively because as i said nothing is difficult with god anything nothing is more difficult than anything else for him but you carry that through into the new testament as well and in your own experience when you can argue that well when god has already delivered me from my sin from the guilt of my sin when he's brought me out from the darkness in which i once lived when he's done that when he's shattered the power of sin in my own life that's something from which i can argue that god is bound to be true to his promise that he will bring me safely home he's already done the most difficult if you like using that language and he's going to actually be be sure to bring us home and in fact you find in the new testament a very similar argument used by paul in romans chapter eight and again it's a chapter we saw recently some of it that's set out there for the encouragement and for the assurance of god's people who trust in christ verse 32 of romans chapter 8 you read as follows well he's verse 31 what shall we say to these things if god is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things you see there's the same principle paul is saying look at this god has already done this amazing

thing he did not spare his own son but he delivered him up for us all now when he's done that paul is saying how shall he not with him in union with him also freely graciously give us all things there's paul's argument so that these christians in rom are encouraged by what he has to say he's saying to them look at what god has already done look at the cross look at what the cross is look at the fact of the cross not the liberal theology version of the cross but the new testament pauline version of the cross the lord's own presentation of his cross and of his death when you see what that entails what that has done what has been included in that what that involved well how is he going to not fulfill what remains of your own christian journey to heaven and entrance to glory that's why he's saying here he has taken out the people he has redeemed them you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode in other words from what already has happened in their deliverance he's now saying you've taken us out you're now looking after us and you will take us home that's exactly where you are in your christian thinking isn't it tonight you're saying to god lord you've done the great thing of delivering me from sin and from the guilt of my sin you've done such a great thing in the cross to provide salvation for me you're looking after me now you're providing for me every day you've given me your holy spirit how shall you not also with christ freely give me all things your future is secure and you can argue that from the certainty the factuality of your redemption in the past and of course he mentions here cringing enemies as well as well as the certain hope terror and dread the chiefs of edom the peoples have heard they tremble the chiefs of edom are dismayed trembling ceases the leaders of moab all the inhabitants of canaan have melted away terror and dread fall upon them because of the greatness of your arm they are still as a stone till your people oh lord pass by until the people pass by whom you have purchased you will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain well don't you wish that that was more the case in our own experience in the day in which we live that the reputation of god not just of his church the reputation of god and delivering his people the power and the might and the presence of god as was mentioned in both prayers tonight that is something we would pray and earnestly plead for more of in our experience in the church and along with the gospel today friends we stand and instead of the church actually causing by the power of god in our midst to cause his enemies to cringe and to fall into a state of dread what we're finding sadly all too often is that it's the church that's cringing against the power of the world why is that what's the reason for that well whatever the cause of it is is because we lack the immense power of god shown through the gospel that we would like to see we pray for that we pray that the days will come when these people in the streets around us who presently stand against god and stand against his gospel that they would actually come to think and hear of god at work in his people and that what they hear of god at work in his people would actually cause them to reflect on

their own situation on issues of eternity well you know there's it's a very solemn thing that it doesn't really appear that throughout our own locality and throughout the nation that the covid pandemic has really had much effect on people's thinking of eternity and that's a very solemn thing that god in his purpose should have brought such devastation through this pandemic and yet people have not really given consideration to god himself through it all well that demonstrates for us that not even the most grievous providence by itself can change people's hearts for that we need the power of god the presence of god the blessing of god of his gospel to his people first of all to you and to me to make ourselves come more alive to bring his power to bear upon our own thoughts and upon our own actions and upon our own daily doings and from there to spread out into the community around us not that we should wait until we feel or know or expect and experience that god is now in our midst to a great extent beyond what we have presently before we start doing outreach and trying to bring the gospel out into a community

I'm not saying that at all what I'm saying is that we have to be doing that but at the same time recognize that it's the lord and his presence and his power that alone can change the hearts of people and that can alone bring that that sense of eternity that sense of what the what this passage calls this sense of terror and dread that falls upon these those who stand against the lord and tremble in the presence of god that's what we have seen in the past when god came in reviving power when god came and blessed his word and empowered his people and quickened them that was part of the effect of it it registered in the community it registered in people's minds people actually said there's something going on here it's unusual what is it what's happening in our town what's happening in our village what's happening in our streets well what was happening was that god was at work that god was busy changing people's lives for the good there is where we really need to bring this passage into our own personal experience and prayer that the arrogant defiance against god that we find sadly marking so much of our society would actually come to be dispelled by the working of the holy spirit and to that end that we would pray and work and work and pray till the lord establishes his people and makes us cause a praise in our midst may bless these thoughts on his word lord of god we thank you that in your word you bring us so many things that both challenge and encourage us to live the lives that we ought to live before you we thank you for the relevance of all of these issues from so long ago relevance that they have for our own day we pray lord that you would bless us to us as a congregation your own truth amongst us bless the gospel so that we may come more and more to be brought vibrantly into your service and forgive us we pray lord for our lack of zeal forgive us for when we ourselves fall short of what we should be yet we give thanks lord for all that you enable us to do and we give thanks for those especially who so give of their time and of their talents to the work of the gospel in our midst as a people may that continue lord to be blessed blessed by you and continue now to bless us and watch over us hear our prayer accept our worship and cleanse us from all our sins for jesus sake amen well final singing this evening is psalm 71