

## Campus-Wide Bible Study Fall 2013

### Week 6

#### Exodus 15:1-21

*For an opening prayer and introductory notes to the leader, see the OPTIONAL supplemental material document on the website.*

*Read Exodus 15:1-21 and pages 64-67 in Goldingay aloud.*

**Leaders:** Use the following questions as guides to your study of the text.

You can choose which questions to focus on—some are better for groups who have new believers or first time Bible study participants, others are for people who have a good knowledge of the Bible. You do not need to answer all the questions! Your role as the leader is to keep the conversation focused on the Bible passage or on the application of the passage to the lives of the members of your group.

#### **Discussing the Text:**

The song in Exodus 15 follows two violent episodes where God kills the firstborn sons of Egypt in the Passover and then drowns the Egyptian army (Exodus 14). Goldingay highlights the difficulties with dancing over death and writes, “When God acts to bring judgment, to show who is really God, or to put down oppressors, there is reason for grief and sadness and for joy and praise” (66).

- Discuss this quote and these violent episodes. Is it okay to celebrate the defeat of a tyrant or should we “not gloat when your enemy falls” (Proverbs 24:17)?

Exodus 15:2 exclaims, “The Lord is my strength and my might, he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.”

- How is the word “salvation” being used here?
- According to this passage and its context, what is salvation?

Exodus 15:19 says, “The Lord will reign forever and ever.” This line is not just a testimony to God’s kingdom, but also a declaration that Israel’s God defeats all those who have claimed lordship over the earth and over the Israelites.

- Discuss how God’s Reign and care was experienced by the Israelites up till this point. Consider how this declaration of God’s Reign and Lordship is central to the Israelite’s understanding and experience of God.

#### **Linking to Christ:**

- By seeing Israel’s deliverance from Egypt as a birth of the nation, we can begin to understand what it might teach us about our own redemption. Deliverance from Egypt was only the beginning for the Israelites. It was like being born again: being born into a new world, called to learn new thoughts, new feelings, new attitudes, new values, new behaviors. God delivered the Israelites through water, and into a new life as God’s people. Much like God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, Jesus Christ delivers us from the consequences of sin. The

Christian tradition celebrates a dying to the old self and rising into new life in Christ through baptism.

### Discussing the World

In Exodus 15 Yahweh is declared the eternal king and in the New Testament we hear about Christians claiming that Jesus is Lord and that he has ultimate supremacy and allegiance in their lives. This is partly in opposition to Caesar, another person in Scripture who, like Pharaoh, made false claims to lordship and divinity. If you grew up in the United States you probably pledged allegiance to the United States and its flag.

- Can we comfortably claim that Jesus Christ is Lord and still pledge allegiance to a country or an institution?
- Are these two pledges or claims in opposition to one another or can they coexist in harmony?

The documentary film *Rize* shows the lives and performances of groups of primarily African American young people as they dance to express themselves and the truth of their lives. At one point, the interviewer asks someone, “Why do you dance?” He looks into the man’s eyes and says, “We dance because we are oppressed.”

- How is or how can dance or artistic expression be a response to oppression? How can art or dance be a protest or force used to motivate action?

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*Digging into the text:* This is not the only Biblical text dealing with violence. Consider Jesus saying that his followers should “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Or consider Isaiah’s words, “In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people. Assyria my handiwork and Israel my inheritance.” (read Isaiah 19:22-25).

- How does God love God’s enemies and work justice for those who are oppressed by them?
- How can God drown the Egyptian army at one point and then call the Egyptians “my people” at another point?

*Advanced:* What is your understanding of salvation and what that words means? One author writes, “The salvation wrought by Yahweh is liberation in the socio-political order.” And goes on to say that, “We should resist softening the importance of this dimension of God’s saving work by spiritualizing the text, making it a metaphor for God’s overcoming of the spiritual enemies or even death.”<sup>1</sup>

- Do you agree with these statements?
- How might oppression limit our experience of “salvation,” however that word is defined?

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<sup>1</sup> Birch, Bruce, Walter Brueggemann, Terrence Fretheim, and David Petersen. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001. 114. Print.