

It's been said that one of the five most stressful events in life is moving house. Along with work, debt, loneliness and relationship problems, times when we move **home** are considered really stressful and testing situations. The **thought** of having to get everything ready to be moved out, not forgetting anything, tying up all the loose ends and getting paperwork all sorted out. But the **most** difficult time is the day itself – will everything be completed on time? Will the removals men turn up? Will we get the key early enough to get into the new house? Will we manage to get all our family, pets and belongings to the new place without any hitches?

I remember well the time we were moving one December (**nobody** in their right mind moves in winter, do they?!) Anyway, it got to the stage when our van was all loaded and our phone had been cut off, so we couldn't contact anyone from home to see what was happening – no mobile phones in those days. So we were sitting in the living room of our neighbour opposite waiting for a call from our solicitor saying we could go to the new house, when the **new** owners arrived and went into our old house! We were now homeless! It brings out a cold sweat when I think about it. Moving – to be avoided if possible!

But now imagine moving thousands of men, women, children, livestock and belongings out of one **country** into another. More than that, into another country they didn't **know**. In fact they didn't even know **which** country they were moving into! Imagine **that**.

Today I want us to look at both ends of this journey; this morning looking at the time when God moved his people out of **Egypt**; and this **evening** looking at their eventual arrival in the land God had **promised** them, as they moved in.

Inevitably as we read passages in the Old Testament, we find we need to read longer sections in order to get the full story, the full picture. This is an exciting story, one that's referred to **throughout** the Bible – it has **eternal** significance, so it's important that we understand what's happening here.

So turn with me to Exodus chapter 13, verse 17 where we find the section with the helpful title 'Crossing the Sea' in the NIV. This story may be familiar to those who're on the Bible course – 3 of us gave an 8 minute talk on this. I might take a while longer today! Exodus 13:17.

Through our study of this story this morning, we're going to see that God is Lord of **all**, and that he works all things for his **glory**; we'll see that God is not only Lord of his own people, but also he is Lord of all; and this passage shows us that God gains glory through deliverance and destruction.

- God is Lord of his people
- God is Lord of all, and
- God gains glory through deliverance and destruction

Let's firstly set the scene, because this isn't a made-up story – these are historical and true events, the things recorded **here** actually happened. The people of God, Israel, had been in slavery in Egypt for 430 years and chapter **1** of Exodus tells us of the harsh and ruthless treatment at the hands of the Egyptians. They did everything they could **think** of to maintain their power over their captives. **Even** to the point of ordering the death of all boys that were born to the Israelites.

But you'll remember that God raised a leader in Moses, who went to Pharaoh to ask him to release his people from captivity. And after God inflicted different **plagues** on the Egyptians, Pharaoh finally let them go, and the Lord moved his people **out** of the country. So as we come to the beginning of our passage, we find the people of Israel beginning to experience their new-found **freedom**.

Verses 17-22 tell us that **God is the Lord of his people**, and we see him **cares** for them as they begin the long journey to the land God promised to their ancestor Abraham. Right back in Genesis 12, we read of God's promises to Abraham – God said *'I will make you into a **great** nation and I will **bless** you; I will make your name **great**, and you will be a blessing ... and **all** peoples on earth will be blessed through you..'* Well that promise had been fulfilled because Abraham's descendants became a large people in Egypt and are now ready to move **out** and fulfil the next part of God's promise, which we read later in Genesis 12: as Abraham travelled through the land of Canaan, we read *'the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give **this** land."* 'It's going to be a very **long** journey, but we see God caring for his people.

We see firstly that God **knows** his people. Verse 17 shows us this. He knows how **fragile** his people are. He knows how **weak** and **vulnerable** they are. He knows **full** well that it wouldn't take **much** for his people to want to turn back. He knows that if they meet opposition, they'll want to go back. So God doesn't take them on the shorter, easier route to the Red Sea, he leads them on the longer **desert** road instead. He knows the route his people can cope with at this time, they won't **cope** with confrontation, so God's route **avoids** it.: not the easiest, but the **best** route. 2

And of course we see that God has a right understanding of his people in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 14, when they realise Pharaoh's **men** are on their way and complain to Moses, *'Was it because there were no graves in **Egypt** that you brought us to the desert to die?... It would have been **better** for us to serve the **Egyptians** than for us to die in the **desert**!'*

God knows his people and leads them on a path they can cope with at that time.

And this is true for God's people **today** - he **knows** us and he knows what we can cope with if we trust in him. At times God will keep us **from** confrontation, because he knows we can't cope. There **will** be times of confrontation and opposition, but God **still** knows us and in these times God will give us what we **need** to get through. He is Lord.

And we're told in verse 21 God **guides** his people: *'By **day** the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by **night** in a pillar of fire to give them **light**, so that they could travel by day or night.'*

I don't know whether you've been driving along in a car in fog. It's amazing how disconcerting it can be – you can't see far ahead, you can't see to the right or left, and to put your full headlamps on sometimes makes it **worse** because the light just reflects **back** off the fog. The thing that gives you **assurance** and confidence that you're keeping to the road and heading the right **way**, is that you can see the rear lights of the car in **front**. Without **them** you don't know if there's a bend or danger ahead, **with** them you have an indication of where the road's going.

So it must have been **really** reassuring to have the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, **knowing** that they revealed God's guidance 24/7. You'll notice that in verse 22 *'Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of them.'* How **reassuring**, how **encouraging**, how **caring**, to know that God was always **with** them. **Always** with them. God is Lord of his people and guides them on their way.

And thirdly God **protects** his people. When Pharaoh's army get **close** to the Israelites in chapter 14:19 and 20 we see the same pillar of cloud God used to **guide** them now goes **behind** them, **between** the armies of Egypt and Israel, the Egyptians in darkness, the Israelites in **light**. God protects his people from the danger.

God is Lord of his people - he **knows** them, he leads and **guides** them, he protects them, he **never** leaves them.

Friends, isn't it wonderful that *'The Lord knows those who are his'* 2 Timothy 2:19. He knows our strengths and weaknesses, he leads and guides us, and he's **said** *'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.'* Hebrews 13:6. What great assurance. **Always** with his people. We should be encouraged and strengthened by this. God is Lord of his people.

What should the **response** of God's people be to God's Lordship? Well we see this in verses 10 – 14 of chapter 14, when Pharaoh's **army** comes charging after them. God's ownership of his people is **challenged** when Pharaoh changes his mind, he's lost the services of his **slaves** and he wants them **back**. He and his army pursue them to the sea. They're **trapped**. What's going to happen?

At this stage Egypt think **they're** in control as they have a large army. It's at this stage that the Israelites think **no-one's** in control, they think they're **doomed**, and would have been better off staying in **captivity** in Egypt. Like all of **us**, they look at the hopeless situation without taking **God** into account, there's no way out, they wish they'd stayed in Egypt. Without God, there **is** no way out - but **with** God there's deliverance for his people.

Pharaoh isn't in control. Even the **Israelites** aren't in control. **God** is in control. In response, God requires their **trust** – verse 14, God tells his people through Moses they need only be **still**, the Lord will fight **for** them. This **doesn't** mean of course not to do anything, but to be **still**, to rest in **God**, **trust** in him for deliverance; God is their **Lord**. Moses tells them to move on, in verse 15. And the story that we've read unfolds and God **delivers** his people in a miraculous way. Despite their weakness and lack of trust, God is their Lord and delivers his people.

But in their deliverance from the **Egyptians** we also see that **God is Lord of all**. He is the **Lord of all creation**, as we see his power at work in verses 21 and 22 in parting the sea for his people to **cross**: *'and all that night the lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.'*

What an amazing sight **that** must have been - a wall of water either side of you. Only last year we saw the awesome power of water, didn't we, as the tsunami struck **Japan** and we remember the boats and whole buildings just being swept away as if made of cardboard. Before that we saw the widespread floods in Pakistan, where swollen rivers just swept through villages and towns from north to south. The **power** of water.

But God is **more** powerful. David wrote in Psalm 93, '***Mightier** than the thunder of the great waters, **mightier** than the breakers of the sea – the Lord on high is mighty.*'

This is the God of creation – he called everything into **being** – he **spoke** creation into place – he said 'Let there be ...' and there **was**. He's the Lord of all creation, and he has power over **all**. He commands the sea to part, and it **does**. There's great **power** in the deliverance of God's people, **awesome** power, **supernatural** power, because God is the Lord of **all**.

*'If God is **for** us, who can be **against** us?'* Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans (8:31). Just **imagine** – God is willing to use such power as **this** to save his people. God is able and ready to use such amazing power to rescue his people from their enemies – are you **hearing** the message? Are you getting what this is **saying**? God is the Lord of his people, but he is also Lord of all. Lord of all creation.

But God is **Lord of all**, not only his **own** people.

At the Bible training course some of us go to, we've been told to pay attention to repetition; when we read things repeated in God's word, we're to take **note**, because when things are **repeated** they tend to stick better.

I want us to look quickly at three verses in chapter 14, which are very **similar** in the things they say: verses 4, 8 and 17:

Look firstly at verse 4, where God says, '*And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them.*' And the **fulfilment** of this is found in verse **8**, where we read, '*The Lord **hardened** the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt so that he pursued the Israelites.*'

Then look at verse **17**: God's speaking again, '*I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them.*' And this is fulfilled in verse 23, when the Egyptians pursue the Israelites into the sea.

We're **told** that God will harden the hearts of Pharaoh and his army. This isn't the **Egyptians** in control of what they're doing, **God** is in control. God is **sovereign**. This isn't the Egyptians acting **despite** what God is doing for his people; this is God in control of the **whole event**. God is the Lord of **all**, not just his own people.

And this should fill God's people with assurance and **hope**, that their God is in **total control** of every situation. If God is Lord of **all**, and in control of every situation, we have to be **joyful** people, because absolutely nothing can stop him from fulfilling his purposes for his people. How great is **that?! His enemies** won't recognise this, but that doesn't alter the **truth**, that God is the Lord of all.

But **glory** then we have to ask ourselves 'why harden their hearts and cause them to pursue the Israelites?' Surely God **could** have rescued his people and moved them out **without** opposition. If God is Lord of **all**, surely he **could** have just moved them into the promised land **without** the confrontation with Pharaoh's army, **without** the loss of life.

To find out **why**, we need to return to the two verses we looked at a few moments ago:

Verse 4: *'And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain **glory** for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the **Lord**.'*

Verse 17: *'I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them.. And I will gain **glory** for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the **Lord** when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.'*

'I will gain glory for myself', God says. Through the great **deliverance** of his people crossing the sea, and through the terrible **destruction** of his enemies pursuing them, God will gain for himself.

God shows who he **is**, as he said he would – *'The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord'* – and we read the **fulfilment** of this in verse 25, where the Egyptians **do** refer to him as the Lord when they say, *'Let's get away from the Israelites! The **Lord** is fighting for them against Egypt.'* God shows through his great **power**, his **deliverance** of his people and the **destruction** of his enemies that he is the **Lord**, the Lord of **all**.

Through this miraculous event, God gained **glory** for himself – verse 30: *'That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great **power** the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people **feared** the Lord and put their **trust** in him and in Moses his servant.'* God's people **delivered**, his enemies **destroyed**, his people **feared** and **trusted** him. This was a journey of building their faith – to give them **trust** in the God who held back the sea.

Of course with every part of the Bible there is a wider application, and this story is no exception. **It points forward to a greater deliverance.**

We've read this account of God delivering his people, of destroying his enemies, and of gaining glory for himself. And we have to **recognise** that it points **forward** to a greater deliverance, the **greatest** deliverance for God's people, that is all those who trust in God's saving power:

Remember when Jesus was born, the angels appeared to the shepherds in the field, and they sang '*Glory to God in the highest*' (Luke 2:14) as they announced the birth of God's **deliverer**, the **Saviour**, the One who'd bring deliverance from captivity to the power of sin and death, man's greatest **enemies**, the things that would stop man from enjoying a relationship with God. Jesus came to bring **salvation** that would bring glory to God.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, before Jesus was crucified on the Cross, he prayed '*Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.*' (John 17:5). God's greatest **glory** is won through the work of Jesus on the cross bringing salvation to all who will believe.

Jesus through his death and resurrection brought the greatest deliverance for his people – deliverance from eternal **death**; he also brought **defeat** for his enemies – sin, Satan and death. And greater power was at work **here**, in raising Jesus from the dead for our salvation, than that needed to part the sea.

God gained great glory for himself when Jesus delivered his people from sin and defeated their enemies through the cross.

His people's response **then** should be ours **now**. **Fear, trust, faithful obedience**, and this will bring God **glory**; Jesus himself says '*This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*'. As we allow God to **change** us and become like **him**, God gains the glory. Through our deliverance, through the destruction of our enemies, God shows that he is Lord of all, and works all things for his glory.

What's our response? What's **your** response to such salvation? How do **you** respond to these things? Do you recognise that God is Lord of all? Do you **accept** that he has brought salvation? Do you **know** that he has given you the opportunity to be delivered from sin? From death? From Satan? Do you **know** God as the Lord of all? Have you accepted Jesus as **your** Lord and Saviour? There **is** salvation, there is **deliverance** available to each one of us.

But we need to know the **God** who is the Lord of all and works all things for his glory. Do **you** know him? The God who swept aside the sea, the One who swept aside your **sin**.

God is Lord of all, and works all things for his glory. This is the ultimate **purpose** of all things – to bring glory to God.

This, however isn't the end: This incident points even **further** forward into the future. There is a day coming, the Bible says, when this Jesus the deliverer, the **Saviour** will come again. And all God's people will know the **fullness** of deliverance from death and judgement. The final book in the Bible, Revelation tells us that on that day will come the **final** and **total** destruction of the enemies of God and his people.

And all God's people will be freed **finally** to live in a new earth and a new heaven. And we'll join all the **angels** in heaven singing "*Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever. Amen!*" Will **you** be there? Will you be saying 'Amen!' ? Will you know God as your Lord forever? Will you be singing glory to his Name?

The invitation's there for you **today**, turn, cast yourself on God's mercy and be saved. Deliverance will come to some, judgement will come to **others** – what will **you** experience on that day?

Exodus 13:17 – 14:31 Moving out – crossing the sea

1. God is the Lord of his people

God knows his people

God guides his people

God protects his people

2. God is Lord of all

Lord of all creation

Lord of all, not only his own people

3. God gains glory through deliverance and destruction

Pointing forward to salvation through Jesus