

Music played an important part in Israel's worship of God. And the Bible (eg. 1 Chronicles 25:1) tells of men and women being chosen to pass down boldly and accurately in songs what God had done. God says in Micah 6:4, '*I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.*' Here we have a song two of those sang, what **some** say is the oldest recorded song. [Read Exodus 15:1-21.]

It's late on Saturday night. You make the phone call. You speak, the person on the other end of the line listens. Arrangements are finally made – time and place – you agree the amount of money to change hands. You replace the receiver and straight away you wonder if you've done the right thing. Did they understand you? Did you understand **them**? Will they follow your instructions? Now you're worried. Your heart begins to beat faster. You pace up and down. You keep going to the window and look out nervously. Nothing yet. The time comes and goes. **Still** nothing. Is it ever going to happen? Then **suddenly** you hear the sound of gravel crunching on your drive, approaching the front door. Can it **be**? Yes it must. The knock at the door. What if it's gone **wrong**? Oh, **please** let it be alright. Another knock. You open the door cautiously. Are you **glad** to hear those words which tell you it's going to be OK: "Pizza delivery!" Safely delivered at last!

We're focusing on one word this morning, and that word is '**deliver**', and its derivatives, **deliverance** and **deliverer**.

Have you noticed? The items of post that are **most** important seem to take **forever** to arrive, don't they? That present you've ordered which has to be delivered by a certain date because it's for your Auntie **Mabel** and it's her birthday next week. That letter offering you a job. That letter with a cheque in it because you've paid too much tax (I wish!). That letter from a loved one. These seem to take **forever** to be delivered, don't they? Whereas all your **bills** arrive on time, **weeks** before you want to pay them, no delay there. Strange isn't it?

But the meaning of the word 'deliver' that I want us to consider this morning is **different** from what I've been talking about so far.

Rather than **delivery**, we're going to be thinking about **deliverance** – the people of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, led by Moses, whose song of praise we've just read.

Let's just fill in the background for a few moments, and remind ourselves what's going on here: the Israelites, let's face it, had **nothing** to commend them to the outside world – they were just wandering shepherds, they'd no great achievements to their name. The **only** thing they had in their favour, was that God **chose** them, not because they were lovable, but because God was **loving**. And Deuteronomy chapter 7 tells us God chose **them** to receive his promise of salvation: *'For God did not set his affection upon you because you were more **numerous** than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord **loved** you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and **redeemed** you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.'* Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

This same verse reminds us that Israel were in Egypt, under the power of Pharaoh. They'd come to live **there**, you'll remember, when Joseph was put in charge of the whole land of Egypt (Genesis 41) when there was a great **famine** in their own land. But they grew in numbers, and the Egyptians saw them as a **threat**, and so made them slaves, and oppressed them and treated them brutally (Exodus 1). The Israelites cried out to God for **help**, and in mercy God heard their cry, and he raised up Moses to lead them out.

Here already we see the Israelites as a **symbol** of mankind: **they** were bound as slaves to Pharaoh; **man** is bound by sin – Charles Wesley writes in his great hymn 'And can it be?' 'Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night'. We're **bound** by our sinful nature. And Romans 8:8 says, *'Those controlled by the sinful nature **cannot** please God.'* So man's stuck. *'The wages of sin is death,'* Romans 6:23 says. Because man is by nature sinful and wants nothing to do with **God**, the future is gloomy. The **bad** news is that some just hide their head in the sand and hope it's not true.

But the **good** news is that when God makes us aware of our situation, of our bondage to sin, this **inclines** us to cry out to God for help, we call to **God** for mercy, like the Israelites did, and he **hears** our cry, and he reveals to us that he sent **Jesus** to free us, to **deliver** us from our bondage to sin. Deliverance. And that verse Romans 6:23 I just **half**-quoted goes on to say, *'but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* Jesus is the Deliverer, the Liberator, the Saviour we all **need** to know.

The Hebrew word used for 'to deliver' is the word 'yasa' (and this word may sound familiar to some of you already – I'll come back to that a little later). As well as meaning 'to deliver' it also means 'to save' and it's used **hundreds** of times in the Old Testament describing what God does.

It's used a lot by the **Psalmist**, for example, Psalm 116:6 *'when I was in great need [God] saved me.'* And Psalm 40:17, *'You are my help and my deliverer; O my God do not delay.'* The same word used in both verses – 'yasa'.

So the references to deliverance are more or less interchangeable with references to salvation. The Israelites recognised all too well their need to be delivered, their need to be saved, and there are **many** stories in the Old Testament of people being delivered or saved: Noah from the flood, King David from his enemies, Daniel from the lion's den, Jonah from the large fish, to name a few.

But the **supreme** example of God's work of deliverance in the Old Testament is the event celebrated **here** in this song, the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. This was the one event referred to again and again as God's saving grace in action. Psalm 106:21 refers to God as *'the one who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt.'* In Hosea 12:9, God says, *'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.'* God delivered his people from Egypt.

You'll remember the story, I'm sure, how Pharaoh eventually allows Moses and his people to **leave** Egypt, but changes his mind and sends his soldiers – the world's strongest army at that time – after them, and they catch up with them by the Red Sea. What a predicament for the people of Israel – slavery in Egypt on one side, certain death in the river on the other. They couldn't do anything to save **themselves**, only **God** could deliver them.

Again this describes vividly the human predicament – man is **trapped** by sin and death. We can't do **anything** to save ourselves – how can the **slave** set himself free? We need **God** to rescue us.

The dramatic rescue of the Israelites is **re-told** in this song that Moses and Miriam sing: verse 8 of our passage; *'By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The waters stood like a wall.'* **God** parted the sea. But the soldiers are after them, vse 9; *'The enemy boasted, "I will pursue, I will overtake them ... I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.'* God led the Israelites safely through the sea; God blew again, the sea returned and the Egyptian soldiers perished. God delivered them **safely and securely** to the other side with the promise of verse 13: *'In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.'*

God delivered Israel **from** the evil that was Egypt, but he delivered them **to** the peace and plenty of the Promised land, and verse 18 tells us, *'The Lord will reign for ever and ever.'* Salvation in the Old Testament.

Salvation in the **New** Testament came when Jesus died on the cross at Calvary, taking the **punishment** for our sins, **delivering** us from sin and death when he rose again, **delivering** us to eternal life in the glory of heaven. God in and through **Jesus** delivering his people.

What does this story tell us about God, **the one who brings about deliverance**, the one who saves? Let's look again at the first half of verse 2.

The Lord *'has become my salvation'*. The Bible includes books of different **types**, the poetry and personal experiences of Psalms, the prophecy of Isaiah and Revelation, what is to come; but we have to remember that this book of **Exodus** is a **historical** account – this really happened. God **did** rescue his people from slavery in Egypt. It **really** happened in place and time, but it was a **supernatural** event – God **miraculously** delivered his people out of Egypt.

And Moses is at great pains to let us know it was **God's** work – if we look at his account in chapter 14, we see that **God** told Moses what to do, he sent an angel to go behind the Israelites to protect them from the soldiers, the **Lord** drove back the sea and even the Egyptians said in verse 25, *'Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.'* They know that they stand no chance **whatsoever** if **God** is against them. Verse 30 says, *'That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians.'* It was **God** who saved them that day.

Jonah, as he sat in the belly of a big fish, called out to God and recognised only **God** could rescue him when he said, *'Salvation comes from the Lord.'* Jonah 2:9. And the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land.

Only God **can** save us from captivity, only God **does** save us from captivity, only God **has** saved us from captivity. Whenever the Israelites remembered this deliverance, they remembered God the **Deliverer**. Jethro – Moses' father-in-law – said, *'Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh.'* Exodus 18:10a. It was **the Lord** who delivered them from the hands of the Egyptians. The Lord has become my salvation.

'But this is the **Old** Testament,' you might say, 'hardly relevant to **me**, in the 21st century, God destroying armies in the Middle East to save his people.'

This is a question we face all the time as Christians – what does all this have to do with **me**? And we must **answer** that question, otherwise we will be seen as irrelevant. Like so many adverts on telly I find – I don't know if you've seen the one where a little girl tries to talk to different animals,

but they all turn away from her until a **parrot** in a tree says ‘Hello’ to her. What’s the advert for? Eurostar trains! And the relevance of a parrot in a tree saying hello to a girl to a railway system is? **I** don’t know.

So, the relevance of God delivering Israel from Egypt to **us** is?

Turn with me, please to Luke chapter 9, verse 28. [Read 28-31] Here Jesus spoke with Elijah and Moses about his ‘**departure**’, his coming death; the **Greek** word used here for ‘departure’ is ‘**exodos**’. Jesus is clearly linking his death on the cross with Israel’s exodus from Egypt. Philip Ryken, in his excellent book on Salvation, says this: ‘The exodus from Egypt was a sign promising the greatest exodus of all: Jesus passing through death’s deep waters and landing safe on the far side to save us from sin.’

There **is** a link between Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, and man in general’s deliverance from sin, salvation. Peter said as he spoke in Jerusalem after Pentecost, ‘*Salvation is found in **no-one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*’ He was of course talking about Jesus. The Lord has become my salvation.

Back to verse 2 of Exodus 15: ‘*The Lord is my **strength** and ...my salvation.*’

Israel’s deliverance here is accomplished by the power of **God**: verse 6, ‘*Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand shattered the enemy.*’ God destroyed Israel’s enemy and there were no survivors, chapter 14:28 tells us. The Egyptian army was destroyed completely. Why? In chapter 12:12b, God says, ‘*.. I will bring judgement on all the gods of Egypt.*’ They were a brutal regime, oppressing God’s people, not allowing them to worship their God. As well as a physical victory, this was a **spiritual** victory – **no-one** can compare to God in majesty, glory and power. He crushed his people’s enemies. His power to save is unique.

In the New Testament we find **one** Saviour, there’s only **one** who is able to save, only **one** able to deliver us from our sins: Jesus. Right from the day he was born the New Testament calls him Saviour – angels say to the shepherds, ‘*Today in the town of David a **Saviour** has been born to you.*’ Luke 2:11.

After Jesus had spoken to the Samaritan woman at the well, the people she told about him said, ‘*now we have heard for ourselves and we **know** that this man really is the Saviour of the world.*’ John 4:42. Paul says in Acts 13:23, ‘*From [David’s] descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised.*’ 5

Remember earlier I said that the Hebrew word for ‘to deliver or save’ was ‘yasa’, and I said that it may sound familiar to some of you? Well that’s because ‘Saviour’ is Jesus’ **name**. ‘yasa’ becomes ‘yesua’, **Jesus** has the power to save, he is our salvation.

Interestingly the **Greek** word used in the New Testament ‘sozo’ is like the Hebrew word ‘yasa’ used in the **Old** Testament – they **both** mean to save and to deliver. So in both Old and New Testaments our salvation requires deliverance, rescue, setting free. So as God rescued his people from Egypt, Jesus rescues us from **our** enemies, he needs to destroy our **enemies** to bring salvation. Zechariah, father of John the Baptist said, *‘Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation [horn here symbolises strength] He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ... to rescue us from the hand of our enemies’* Luke 1:68, 69, 74.

Jesus is our strength and salvation – only **he** is strong to save. For him to **save** us he has to **deliver** us from all our enemies, as God destroyed the Egyptian army. But **what** enemies? You might say, ‘I haven’t **got** any enemies – I’m a very nice person, and I’ve never **made** any enemies.’ Our **enemies** are the things which stop us from enjoying a relationship with God, which stop us from the life – **eternal** life – which God wants us to enjoy. Let’s go through them quickly:

Jesus saves us from the **guilt of our sins**, that’s why he came; when an angel appeared to Joseph he said, *‘[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’* Matthew 1:21. Romans 6:22 says that we have been set free from sin through Jesus.

We see the effects that sin has had on the world around us, but Jesus saves us from the **consequences** of sin. In Galatians 1:4 we read, *‘the Lord Jesus Christ ... gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age.’* And Paul urges the crowd in Jerusalem to accept Jesus and *‘save [them]selves from this corrupt generation.’* Acts 2:40. Jesus delivers us from sin and the consequences of sin.

We are delivered from **God’s wrath** – God is angry at sin – but Jesus has delivered us from our sin so he has also delivered us from that wrath. We read in Romans 5:9, *‘Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much **more** shall we be saved from God’s **wrath** through him!’*

Jesus saves us from **the devil**, Satan as he's called in the Bible. He tries his **best** to turn us away from God, like he did at the beginning with Eve and Adam. Peter writes in his first letter, '*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*' 1 Peter 5:8. **Still** think you've got no enemies? But Jesus **delivers** us from the devil who will ultimately be thrown into a lake of burning sulphur, we read in Revelation 20:10.

Jesus saves us from our enemies - sin, the consequences of sin, God's wrath, the devil.

In fact he saves us from **every evil attack**. There's a wonderful verse which tells us of the Christian's assurance and hope for the future: 2 Timothy 4:18 says, '*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.*' Whatever we face as Christians between now and when we go to be with him, Jesus will deliver us from every evil attack. **Nothing** can separate us from our Lord, we will be safely and securely delivered to heaven. That's Jesus' **promise** to those who know him and love him.

The final enemy he saves us from – death. We quoted earlier from Romans, '*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*' Jesus saves us from sin and the consequences of sin, and so he saves us from **death**, which is the **ultimate** consequence of sin. Because Jesus defeated death when he rose again to **life**, he delivered us **too** from this final enemy. Jesus' resurrection assures us of the **greatest** exodus – from death to eternal life.

Jesus delivers us from our enemies – **all** lie crushed beneath his feet: sin, the consequences of sin, the wrath of God, the devil, every evil attack and death. **All defeated** by Jesus. Jesus has the power to deliver his people from **all** their enemies. Safely and securely delivered.

'**The Lord is my strength and my song, he has become my salvation.**' Because the Lord is my strength and salvation, he is also my **song** – the Exodus out of Egypt gave the Israelites something to **sing** about, first Moses, then Miriam, and then everyone else joined in. Salvation calls for a song. Salvation puts a song in everyone's heart. This is **part** of the way that God gains the **glory** for himself – when those he has delivered tell of what he has done in song. It's **natural**. Those Jesus has delivered from their sins have a **song** in their heart. We love to sing songs of praise to God, telling of what he's done for us.

He is our strength and our song, he has become our salvation.

I received a letter in the post the other day and on the back it said, 'If undelivered, please return to ...' such and such an address. **Letters** may fail to be delivered because they rely upon a human to deliver them. But Jesus' work of **deliverance** **never** fails. God's people are safely and securely delivered.

Winston Churchill, speaking about the Battle of Britain, when our airmen delivered this country from the threat of German invasion, said: 'Never has so much been owed by so many to so few.' Well, he was **wrong** because for our greater deliverance from our slavery to **sin, all of mankind** since the beginning of creation owes **everything** to one man, Jesus.

And that's why we celebrate communion, we remember that Jesus died on the cross that we may be delivered from our sins, delivered from all our enemies, so that we may know God forever.

Prayer.

All God's people have something to sing about. We sing of what God has done.

I will sing of the Lamb.