

Ministry of Grace Church

Exodus 12 (2nd half) – Speaker Notes

Last time we looked at the first half of Exodus chapter 12. This time we'll look at the second half. You will recall that a major theme for the last several chapters has been *Yahweh's* demand that Pharaoh release his firstborn, Israel. *Yahweh* warned Pharaoh that if he did not release Israel that He would kill all the firstborn of Egypt. Last time, we also looked at the preparations that the Israelites had to make to protect themselves from losing their own firstborn sons. We talked about the fact that the actions of the Israelites, sacrificing a spotless lamb and painting the doorposts and lintel with its blood, were not what saved the firstborn of their households. It was their faith, the fact that they truly believed that doing these things would protect their firstborn. Because of their faith, God blessed them and protected everyone in their household.

Now, in this portion of Exodus chapter 12, we will see our God in action, pouring out His vengeance against those who refused to believe in Him and submit themselves to Him. It appears that all the houses of the Israelites were protected because all of them were obedient. However, we will see that it was not just Hebrews who left Egypt the morning after the death angel killed all the firstborn. There was a significant number of non-Jews who left with them. As it turns out, this was both a blessing and a curse. A blessing to those who wanted to escape the bondage of Egypt, but a curse to the faithful Israelites because this "mixed multitude" became the source of discontent and murmuring among *Yahweh's* people as they traversed the wilderness in search of the Promised Land.

We will be looking at some of the parallels between the experiences of the children of Israel in their wilderness wandering and the experiences of Christians in our wandering through this life as we seek our own kind of "Promised Land." Their journey was initiated by the blood of the sacrificial lamb just as our journey was initiated by the blood of the sacrificial Lamb of God. We will observe God's protection of the faithful Israelites just as our God promised that He would never leave us nor forsake us. Their act of faith preserved their lives just as our saving act of faith preserves our spiritual life. The annual observance of the Passover is a reminder to them of God's provision for their lives just as our regular observance of Communion is a reminder to us of God's provision for our spiritual lives. Finally, we will see that this Passover event was the beginning of their lives of faith and service to their God just as our day of salvation was the beginning of our lives of faith and service to Almighty God through Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look more closely at the events of that fateful night in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 12:29-30

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.

Much has been said, and written, about whether it was *Yahweh* who personally struck down all the firstborn or whether it was an angel carrying out the executions. In addition, many are confused because they see our God as a loving God who would never do such a thing. Yes, He is a loving God, and yet He is a righteous God as well, and He must judge sin. In the book of Revelation, we see Him as the Lamb (actually, the little Lambkin) who is said to pour out His wrath on mankind, killing most of the population of the earth during the seven years of His judgments. There you will notice that frequently it is angels who carry out the infliction of the judgments. Likewise, here we can see that it is God who determines the outcome but it is an angel, specifically the “destroyer” who carries out the will of Him who sits on the throne.

For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. (Exodus 12:23)

The Hebrew word translated “destroy” in this verse is *shachat*, meaning “to wipe out, to ruin, to corrupt, to spoil, or to destroy.” Although not specifically identified, this being was most likely an angel. As further corroboration, we see other places in the Bible where angels are the ones who carry out God’s judgment of destruction. In the book of 2 Samuel, we read:

And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” ... (2 Samuel 24:16)

Previously we talked about who exactly is being referred to as the “firstborn.” The Hebrew word is *bekor*, meaning “the first child born.” But, as we said, this word is frequently used in the Bible to refer to those who were not the eldest child. It often refers to the favored child.

Also notice that we are told there was not a single house among the Egyptians where there was not someone who was killed. Because of that, we can surmise that the term “firstborn” as used here is a reference to the most prominent or most favored person in each household.

Egypt was known for their loud expressions of mourning. According to the commentary of Adam Clarke:

No people in the universe were more remarkable for their mournings than the Egyptians, especially in matters of religion; they whipped, beat, tore themselves, and howled in all the excess of grief. When a relative died, the people left the house, ran into the streets, and howled in the most lamentable and frantic manner.

This is shown clearly to us, as we see in verse 30:

And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.

Exodus 12:31-33

Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!” The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.”

Notice in verse 31 that it does not say that Moses and Aaron went to be in Pharaoh’s presence. Remember, Pharaoh told Moses that he would never see the face of Pharaoh again. It appears,

rather, that Pharaoh sent messengers to Moses and Aaron to proclaim his message. This is in keeping with what Moses said to Pharaoh in their previous meeting:

And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ (Exodus 11:8)

The command given to Moses and the Israelites was, “Up, go out from among my people,” The word translated “up” is the Hebrew word *qum*, meaning “to stand up” or “to rise up from a seated or reclining position to a standing position.” It appears that the message came from Pharaoh in the middle of the night while the Israelites were still sleeping. The command was to get out of bed immediately and leave at once. However, it is fairly certain that they did not leave their houses until daybreak because of God’s instructions regarding the Passover. He had said:

... None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. (Exodus 12:22)

The message delivered from Pharaoh also included, “take your flocks and your herds, as you have said,” which is precisely what Moses had originally told Pharaoh that they would do. Those who try to negotiate with God eventually discover that He does not change. Had Pharaoh agreed to these terms when originally delivered by Moses, he would have saved many of the people of Egypt and most of their wealth.

Notice that the text says, “the Egyptians were urgent with the people.” This is further evidence that the message was delivered by representatives of Pharaoh rather than at a face-to-face meeting. Finally, we are told that the messengers from Pharaoh urged the Israelites to leave quickly saying, “We shall all be dead.” Pharaoh’s emissaries finally recognized that Moses’s God was capable of taking any life He desired. They truly had come to know “the fear of the LORD.”

Exodus 12:34-36

So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Due to the commandment given by God regarding the Passover meal, the people had not put any leaven in their bread. Now, being in haste, they had no time to add the leaven. They apparently still had the dough in the bowls in which it was originally made.

And - as we noted earlier, the Israelites asked their Egyptian neighbors for silver, gold, and clothing, which the Egyptians apparently gave freely. The Hebrew word translated, “had asked” is *sha'al*, meaning “to ask or demand.” As mentioned previously, this word does not mean “to borrow” as the KJV translates it. As a result of the fifth through the eighth plagues, God had already stripped Egypt of much of the wealth of the land. Now, through the generosity of the Egyptian people, their personal material wealth was largely placed in the hands of the Israelites as well.

Exodus 12:37-39

And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

We don't know for certain where Rameses was. Some believe that this was an early name for Heliopolis (most likely the city of Pharaoh at that time), while others believe that it was an early name for Tanis. To add to this confusion, the entire land of Goshen (the fertile Nile delta region) is sometimes referred to as Rameses. Because the Israelites were most likely concentrated in the land of Goshen, it is reasonable to believe that they began their journey from there. There also is no known ancient city in Egypt called Succoth. The word simply means "booths" or "tents." So, it was literally a "tent city." It was probably the place where they encamped the first night.

So, how many children of Israel fled Egypt on that fateful night? Well, actually they fled the following morning, but how many were there? If we assume that there were an equal number of women as men (a reasonable assumption), the number climbs from 600 thousand to 1.2 million. If we assume that there were on average 3 or 4 children for each man (a conservative assumption given the large family sizes that were common at that time) then we see this number is likely to have been upwards of 4 million.

And, they took their livestock with them. Remember, the Israelites had been shepherds from the days of Joseph, when Jacob (Israel) and his family first moved to Egypt. At that time they were even put in charge of the flocks of the Egyptians. Therefore, it is not surprising that they left Egypt with large flocks of both sheep and goats.

We are told that a "mixed multitude" went with them. The word "mixed" is from the Hebrew word *ereb*, meaning "a grouping of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds." These are thought to include Semitic people who had migrated to Egypt (possibly those who moved to Egypt during the several famines which had occurred) along with Egyptians. These people may have included believers in *Yahweh* as well as those who simply saw this as an opportunity to get out from under the oppressive rule of the Pharaohs. Whatever the makeup of this group, we know that they later became a source of discontent among the Israelites soon after they left Egypt.

And the mixed multitude in their midst lusted with great lust. And the sons of Israel also turned and wept, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? (Numbers 11:4) [MKJV]

Because of the hurried nature of their departure the children of Israel had no time to prepare proper provisions for the trip. In fact, they may have only had sufficient bread for about a week.

Exodus 12:40, 41

The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

The text claims that the Israelites lived in Egypt for 430 years. This just doesn't seem right. It appears to be a reference to Genesis chapter 15, where it says:

And He said to Abram, You must surely know that your seed shall be a stranger in a land not theirs, and shall serve them. And they shall afflict them four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13)

This refers to Abram's "descendants" which started with Isaac who was born twenty-five years after first being promised to Abram. Hence, the four hundred and thirty years is probably a reference to the time beginning when Abram was first called out of Ur of the Chaldeans. This is corroborated by the Apostle Paul's teaching to the Galatians:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. ... This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. (Galatians 3:16-17)

Additionally, the Septuagint translates **Exodus 12:40** this way: "The sojourning of the children and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt was 430 years." This is also the rendering of The Samaritan Pentateuch, which is believed by many scholars of ancient manuscripts to exhibit the most accurate copy of the five books of Moses."

We are also told that this occurred "on that very day." Once again, we find here an expression that has spurred debate for centuries. This expression does not necessarily mean that on the day which exactly completed the four hundred and thirty years the children of Israel came out of Egypt. It is more likely a reference to the fact that all the hosts of the LORD went up from Egypt on that very same day. They did not leave in groups, nor did some of them begin the journey on that day and others began the journey on the next day, or the day after that. All of the children of Israel began their journey out of the land of Egypt on that very same day. In fact, this same exact expression is repeated in verse fifty-one without any reference to the four hundred and thirty years:

And on **that very day** the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts. (**Exodus 12:51**)

Exodus 12:42

It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations.

According to the *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, a more accurate reading of the first part of this text would be, "It was a preservation-night of the Lord, to bring them out of the land of Egypt." In other words, it is not so much important that this is a solemn observance as it is a recognition that it was on this night that God preserved His chosen children. For the Israelites, the Passover is a time to remember the physical preservation of their lineage from the oppression of the land of Egypt. In a similar manner, the Christian's observance of Communion is a time to remember our spiritual preservation from the penalty of sin. Let's all stop for a moment and realize that our forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ is perpetual, it's eternal. It will never, ever, end! Hallelujah!

Exodus 12:43-45

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it.

On the surface, this seems a strange place to identify additional regulations regarding the eating of the Passover. However, as noted in verse thirty-eight, there was a mixed multitude that came out of Egypt that night. Apparently there were many who came out with the Israelites who were neither children of Israel nor real believers in Jehovah as the one true God. The Passover meal was instituted for the Israelites only, not for the mixed multitude. The entire ceremony, from the initial selection of the perfect lamb to the sacrificial death of the lamb and the method of preparing it and eating it, is a picture of salvation for God's chosen. Though many others may benefit from God's care for His children and though many may mimic the actions and practices of Christians today, salvation is only for those who have a genuine faith in the sacrificial blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Therefore, it was necessary for God to instruct the children of Israel to exclude foreigners and those who had not obediently followed circumcision as evidence of their faith in God, from the observance of this event. Neither a foreigner, a stranger travelling through the land (sojourner), nor a hired laborer was permitted to observe this ceremony. Only those who were of the household of Israel (including slaves who had been purchased, and only after having been circumcised) were to remember what their God had done for them. Those slaves who had been purchased and circumcised were considered fully part of the children of Israel. This was true even after the Law was given, the circumcised, owned slaves of the household of the priests were even permitted to eat of the consecrated food that was forbidden for all except the priests themselves.

Exodus 12:46-51

It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.” All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

Here we have a reiteration of the regulations regarding the Passover meal with one detail not mentioned earlier, namely: “and you shall not break any of its bones.” This was a prophetic anticipation of the true Lamb of God whose blood would be applied to the sins of all who believed on Him:

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. (John 19:31-33)

Once again, the Israelites were reminded that this was an observance for them and that strangers were treated differently. The word “stranger” is from the Hebrew word *geyr*, meaning “a non-native or an alien.” When a person who is not of the lineage of the children of Israel wants to observe the Passover, he is to demonstrate his belief in Jehovah as the one true God just as Abraham did. And, he must first submit himself and all his male children to circumcision.

So What?

So, what are we doing studying the Old Testament? That’s for people who are enslaved to the Law and are required to obey the law, right? And, the Apostle Paul tells Christians:

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

No, we are not under the Law. We are not slaves to the Law. We are not required to keep the law in order to receive or maintain our salvation. But our God does not change. And, even though we are not under the Law of Moses and we have been set free from sin, we do have a master. We are sons of God, but we are also slaves of God:

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ... (Romans 6:22-23)

Since we now have a master who has saved us from the penalty of sin, who has promised us eternal life, and who loves us supremely, we should live our lives in a manner that brings Him praise, not embarrassment. One of the ways to know how to serve Him properly is to look at those who have not done so. We can learn from their mistakes. That's why we're looking at the story of the Exodus. We can learn about our God by seeing how he treats those whom he loves.

We see from this section of Scripture that because of faith, and works of obedience as proof of that faith, the children of Israel were separated from the world (Egypt) and began a journey with God. This journey, as we will see in the coming weeks, was not without difficulties, trials, and divine chastening. Nonetheless, we see that *Yahweh* was constantly in their midst watching over them, protecting them, and teaching them about Himself and how to behave in His presence. And, at the end of their journey they were ushered into the Promised Land. But, this journey began for the Israelites only after the sacrifice of the paschal lamb and the application of his blood.

What a beautiful picture of the Christian walk. We were born into a world of sin:

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12)

But according to God's timing, we were separated from the world when our eyes were opened to the truth of the gospel. Following our converting faith, our works (as the Apostle James points out) serve as proof that that faith is genuine.

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; (James 2:19-22)

Our journey of faith began that day we first believed in the saving blood of Jesus Christ and continues today. God has promised to never leave us not forsake us, just as He promised the Israelites.

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

We have the seal of His Holy Spirit just as the children of Israel had the ever-present pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. (Exodus 13:21-22)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Just like the journey of the children of Israel, our Christian journey has hardships, trials, and chastening from a loving Heavenly Father.

My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11-12)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

He walks beside us and, through His Word, teaches us who He is and how we are to behave in His presence.

But the Helper, (Greek *paraclētos*, meaning “One who is called alongside”) the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)

And, this journey began only after we believed the gospel message about the sacrificial death of the Paschal Lamb of God and the application of His blood.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures ... (1Corinthians 15:1-5) and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (Revelation 1:5)

We see, therefore, that the Passover event, typifies the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in payment for the sins of the world, enabling us to truly become God's children. And we see the exodus from Egypt, the wanderings through the wilderness, and the eventual entrance into the Promised Land are all a picture of our journey through this life and our future entrance into His presence.

Therefore, knowing these things, how humbly and fearfully ought we to behave in our travels here on this earth. Now that we have seen this example of God's miraculous provision for His children, how can we ever doubt that He will take care of all our needs? For we know there is coming a day of judgment for all mankind. A day when all that we currently call reality will disappear and the only things that will be left are the things that we have done for Him!

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you

are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.
(2Peter 3:9-14)

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the writer tells us about all the Old Testament saints who acted by faith, including: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and many of God's prophets.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,
(Hebrews 11:37-39)

The writer of Hebrews goes on to encourage us with:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

And the writer of Hebrews closes with:

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

I can't add to that!

Let's pray.