

December 15, 2024

## DELIVERED FROM EGYPT: EX. 12:21-32

God delivers His people from their bondage.

### FACILITATOR 2

#### Introductory Activity (adapted from ETB LG, 39)

**Write** “Inherited It,” “Married Into It,” and “Started It” on the board or a large piece of paper (You could also write each word on a piece of paper and display them). Ask the group to name some Christmas traditions and indicate if they were inherited, adopted through marriage, or created by them and their spouse.

**Read or summarize** the paragraph at the top of page 38 of the ETB Leader Guide. It is also found on page 28 of the Personal Study Guide. (“Most people observe Christmas traditions. Some exchange gifts on Christmas Eve, others on Christmas morning. Some families have an artificial tree, while others prefer a real tree. Families differ. Most of us participate in the traditions because they are, well, traditions. Even if it’s always been that way and we aren’t sure why, it’s still what we do. Those traditions matter.”)

**Transition:** Today’s lesson relates to the events surrounding the tenth plague in Egypt. In the passage, we learn about **God’s instructions** concerning the plague, **God’s institution of a tradition** to help Israel remember the result of the plague, and **that intended result**.

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**Introduce the Passage and Transition:** Last week, we left off after Moses’ first appearance before Pharaoh. Things did not go as planned for Moses or the people. Pharaoh refused to let the people go. As a result of this response, the people and Moses became demoralized, but God reassured them that He would accomplish their rescue. In the chapters following that encounter, God demonstrated His power over Egypt and its false gods through a series of plagues. The purpose of the plagues was to cause the release of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Pharaoh consistently refused to acknowledge the Lord and let the people leave. After the ninth plague, there was a heated confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. Exodus 10:28 and 29 tell us, “<sup>28</sup> Pharaoh said to him, ‘Leave me! Make sure you never see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you will die.’ <sup>29</sup> ‘As you have said,’ Moses replied, ‘I will never see your face again.’” Following this exchange, God reassures Moses again. Chapter 11:1a read, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you out of here.’” Let’s look at that now.

#### 1. HEARD (EXODUS 2:23-25)

#### Notes:

This is the Aim of the lesson. It drives our discussion and should be the point we drive home throughout the lesson.

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETB Comm)
- *New American Commentary: Acts* (NAC)
- *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Acts* (HOTC)
- *Preaching the Word: Exodus* (Preaching)
- *Exalting Christ in Exodus* (Exalting)

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**Read or have someone read** Exodus 2:23-25

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**Object Lesson:** (adapted from *Object Lesson: Report Cards*, ETB LG, 41)

“Show adults an image of a report card [and ask] how they felt about getting report cards in school.”

**Explain:** “Note that our attitude usually depended on the grades we expected. Ask: What are some criteria that go into determining grades on a report card?”

**Guide and ask:** Guide the group back to the passage and ask, “What criteria did God use to determine if Israel passed the test in Exodus 12:21-23?”

**Explain:** When a student gets to the end of the semester, the grade on the report card indicates whether they have fulfilled all the criteria for the course. The Israelites would learn whether they “passed” when the Lord passed over their home.

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The requirements were: First, He tells them to select an animal from the herd. In verse 5, more instructions are given. God told Moses, “<sup>5</sup>You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats.” Second, they were to slaughter the animal and catch its blood in a basin. Third, they were to use a hyssop branch and paint the blood on the lintel (the top) and doorposts of the entrance to the home. If these requirements were met, the Lord would pass over the home, and the firstborn child would not die.

We are going to talk about the symbolism later in the lesson, but let’s talk about the instructions first.

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**Guide and Discuss:** Guide the group to page 31 of their Personal Study Guide and discuss the question near the top of the page. (“After having survived the plagues, what do you imagine the Hebrew people thought as they heard these instructions? How would they have felt as they anticipated what was about to happen?”) (Allow the group to respond before explaining in detail. See below.)

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Before we answer that question, let’s consider the unique nature of this final plague. According to Polhill, “the Israelites... were always implicitly and sometimes explicitly exempted from the plagues.” (NAC, 206) So, it appears this is the first time they have had to prepare. This might cause someone to wonder why this plague was to affect the Israelites. We should first consider the purpose of the plagues and the obedience of God’s people.

Notes:

“The command to slaughter the animal indicates that the blood of the lamb/kid goat was shed as that the Israelite family could live; the animal’s life was given up to save others from death.” (ETB Comm, 32-33)

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The Purpose of the Plagues: We do not have time to explore this in depth. But we should note what God said in Exodus 12:12. "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the Lord; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt." The polytheistic nature of the Egyptians required that God demonstrate His uniqueness multiple times. If He humiliated one false god, the Nile, for example, in the first plague, the Egyptians might have seen Yahweh as more powerful than that one god. Through multiple plagues, Yahweh effectuates a complete renunciation of their entire religious system. In this final plague concerning life itself, God, the creator of all things and one who would rescue and preserve the Israelites, will demonstrate that obedience to Him is the only source of life preservation.

The Obedience of the People: It is interesting throughout chapters 11 and 12, God asserts that the plague will strike the Egyptians, and nothing will come against Israelites, not even a dog will snarl at them (Exodus 11:7). Nevertheless, they were to prepare their doorways etc. How do we square this circle? First, we should note that while the exodus has not happened, God is already speaking of it in the past tense (12:7 cf. Preaching, 312-313). Second, as we will see in 12:28, the people did what was commanded of them. God, in His omniscience, knew the people would obey and, therefore, knew the plague would not come against the people. An equation might help us (the plague=death; obedience=life; God knew they would obey=God knew they would survive the plague).

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Let's return to our question about how they might have been feeling and what they might be thinking. They were probably feeling a little trepidation. They might have developed a sense of awe in Yahweh after watching the previous manifestations of His power. This trepidation plus awe motivated them to action. It is the same for us today. Is that not the gospel? Trepidation comes when a person is faced with the truth of sin and judgment. Awe comes when one realizes that God is holy and can save. The act of repentance comes when trepidation meets awe.

**Summarize Transition:** Like the report that reveals the results of a semester's worth of work, the morning after the plague reveals the results of obedience. True obedience resulted in the rescue of God's people. We can be reminded that "Believers will be blessed when they follow God's instruction." (ETB LG, 41; PSG, 36) In our next passage, we will see that God is already looking to the future. He tells them how to go about remembering this very important work of salvation by their Lord.

## 2. CELEBRATION (EXODUS 12:24-28)

**Read (or have someone read)** Exodus 12:24-28

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Notes:

"To say that not even a dog would stick out its tongue at an Israelite was a simple, graphically idiomatic way of saying that the Israelite humans and cattle would simply see no harm whatever from the tenth plague." (NAC, 267)

"One should appreciate the fact that an omniscient God would hardly need a sign to know which people had been faithful to him and which had not. The sign therefore was presumably at least as much for the benefit of those who were to provide it, to require them to undertake an action that involved more than mere ideation, but one demonstrating their confidence in God's power to kill as well as to rescue." (NAC, 276)

**Explain:** This passage begins with “keep this command.” The command does not reference what just proceeded in our lesson. Instead, it refers to the more in-depth description of the festival of Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread given to Moses in 12:14-20. Verse 24 instructs the people to celebrate these festivals “permanently.” The word translated as permanently could be rendered “until forever.” It is important for us to ask why the Lord would command the people to establish a week-long festival to remember the events of the exodus. Such an important event would surely be remembered and celebrated. The Lord knows that humans can be forgetful. We should also note that “until forever” is a long time. The celebration of the Passover would ensure that people would remember the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from bondage forever. Let’s consider the means and purpose of remembering and the message we are to remember.

### **The Means and Purpose of Remembering**

Harrison tells us that “In Israelite life the early Passover and unleavened bread observances were comparatively simple in character, but during the monarchy more elaborate passover rituals came into use (cf. 2 Kgs 23:21–23; 2 Chr 35:1–19).”<sup>1</sup> In Moses’ early description of the Passover, we do not have an elaborate explanation of the various cups and question-and-answer rituals during the celebration. However, it is clear that in the Passover celebration, God is giving the people a tactile discipleship tool. Rykan explains, “The feast God’s people shared was something could see, taste, touch, and smell.” (Preaching, 306) The meal and everything that went with it was a means of remembering what God did *and* a method of teaching others what God did. Imagine a young child decades or two hundred years after the exodus event. He or she is part of what has become a big event in the nation. The event includes special activities and special foods. All of these tactile things would cause the child to ask, “What does this ceremony mean to you?” This question gives parents the opportunity to teach of God’s great and mighty work in Egypt. “We see the need to remember God’s saving power from generation to generation (Exod, 13:3)” (Exalting, 66)

### **The Message We Are to Remember**

The message for the Israelites was simply the work God did to rescue them from Egypt. “Passover had an even deeper meaning; however, the lamb was called a ‘sacrifice’ (12:27) because it was an offering for sin. Passover was not simply about deliverance from Egypt; it was also about salvation from sin.” (Preaching, 308) It pointed Israel to the Messiah, who we know is Jesus. I Corinthians 5:7 tells us that Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

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#### Notes:

“Three times God told Moses that he wanted Passover to become a permanent addition to Israel’s calendar. (12:14, 17, 24)” (Preaching, 306)

“The Passover celebration was designed in part to prompt curiosity and stimulate interest of children, most of whom would not have been present for the events of the original Passover.” (ETB Comm, 35)

<sup>1</sup> R.K. Harrison, “Feasts and Festivals of Israel,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 786.

**Ask:** What are some “rituals” we do in the church today to help us remember the works of God?

**Explain:** Jesus himself connected His death with the Passover when He instituted the Lord’s Supper during a Passover meal. The Lord’s Supper is a tactile reminder of Christ’s death. The bread and the juice represent the body of Christ broken and the blood of Christ spilled for our sin. Likewise, baptism is a tactile practice to celebrate rebirth. It pictures for us the resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection.

**Ask:** Israel might have needed the Passover celebration to remember the work of the Lord in a time before books and other widely available recording devices, but why did God give these tactile practices to the church?

**Explain:** “Church historian Clair Davis describes the Christian life as a ‘combination of amnesia and *deja vu*.’ He says, ‘I know I’ve forgotten this before.’ In other words, as we follow Christ we keep needing to learn the same lessons over and over because we keep forgetting them.” (Preaching, 305). God knew that the human condition requires that we be constantly reminded and to constantly remind ourselves of the mighty work and power of God. The ordinances practiced by the church body help us do that, but as we see in the Passover instructions given in Exodus 12, there is a more intimate means for remembering, reminding, and teaching. It is over the family dinner table that the child would ask the father to explain the meaning of the Passover. Similarly, it is the role of parents to disciple children today. Moses explains this most clearly in a passage of scripture that we call the Shema. The passage is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, but let’s look at one part of it.

**Read or have someone read** Deuteronomy 6:6-8 (<sup>6</sup>These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. <sup>7</sup>Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.)

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**Explain:** This, of course, means that families are to discuss God’s Word, and parents are to teach God’s Word in all situations. God intended the family to be the primary instrument for evangelizing and disciplining children. One way families do this is through participation in the local church body. A child’s participation in small groups and worship that teach Scripture in developmentally appropriate ways *helps* parents disciple their kids the rest of the week. Serving as families or raising kids who see parents serve in the church is a means of discipling children.

#### Notes:

“The technical term for the Passover/Jesus connection is called ‘typology.’ A ‘type’ is a picture that is repeated later in the biblical story, and most of the time this repetition far exceeds the original picture in significance and importance.” (ETB Comm, 30)

“This idea of remembering God’s grace is an important practice for Christians. We are forgetful people. The Scriptures urge us to [remember. (Neh 4:14; Eccl 12:1; Ps 105:5; 2 Tim 2:8 ESV)]. when Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper (which is of course linked to Passover), He said ‘Do this in remembrance of Me’ (Luke 22:19). It is important that we remind ourselves, and others, of all that God has done for us.” (Exalting, 66)

**Summarize and Transition:** There came a time when Israel stopped following the Lord and practicing the Passover. A young king named Josiah discovered God's Word and started a revival in Israel. In the process, he reinstituted the Passover. We start a revival in our homes when we begin to remember what God has done. We can evangelize our kids when we talk about what God has done in our lives. We can disciple our kids and prepare them to be great Christ followers when we talk about what God has done. Whether it's our children or others, this passage reminds us that "Believers are called to tell others of the things God has done." (ETB LG, 43; PSG, 36)

### 3. VICTORY (EXODUS 12:29-32)

**Read (or have someone read)** Exodus 12:29-32

**Ask:** How extensive was the plague? (It affected everyone, from the least to the greatest. The Bible tells us that there was not a house in Egypt unaffected. "The ancients held the firstborn male in high honor. Earlier in Exodus, God had called Israel His firstborn son (4:22-23). By refusing to release God's firstborn from captivity, Pharaoh lost his own firstborn." (ETB LG, 44) Modern readers might question God's actions here. In response to this question, some believers might argue that God was returning evil for evil. Polhill has a nuanced answer. He writes, "This was not a case, however, of returning evil for evil. It was a case of divine retribution, justice meted out to those who deserved it, a judgment against an entire society and their absurd religious beliefs that led them to practice the horrible treatment they had given the Israelites in the past, thinking it appropriate." (NAC, 291-292) If the Israelites had started a revolt and overthrown the Egyptians, they would have been repaying evil for evil. Instead, they relied on the Lord to keep his promises and judge the evil nation.

**Explain:** In this passage, we see the fulfillment of God's promises. In Exodus 3:20, God told Moses that Pharaoh would let the people go. In 6:1, He was more explicit and said that Pharaoh would drive the people from the land. Through the nine plagues, Pharaoh resisted the Lord. It was only in the early morning hours on the day following the tenth plague that he relented and ordered the people to leave Egypt. We also see the fear of Pharaoh. The last thing Pharaoh communicates to Moses is his desire for Moses/God to bless him. The last time a Pharaoh was "blessed" by an Israelite was when Joseph blessed the Pharaoh (Gen 47:7, 10). In that case, the Pharaoh was blessed because of something good done by God (Joseph's dream and wise counsel). In the case of Moses, a blessing was desired because of God's judgment. In our lives, people will seek the Lord because of the good they see in believers. Some, on the other hand, will seek the Lord because of the trials and tribulations brought on by life and sinful actions. (cf. NAC, 294) "Through the ten plagues Pharaoh learned

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about the Lord, His strength, and glory (7:17; 8:10-11; 9:14, 29-30). Ultimately, the Lord brought Pharaoh into humble submission (12:30-32; see 10:3)." (ETB Comm, 31)

**Summarize and Transition:** Just as the Israelites could rest assured that God would rescue them. Today, "Believers can trust that God will do what He says He will do." (ETB LG, 45; PSG, 36)

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### **CONCLUDE**

Guide and consider: Guide the group to page 36 of their Personal Study Guide. Ask someone to read the first statement and then ask them to reflect on the following questions. Repeat this for the other two statements.

- "Believers will be blessed when they follow God's instruction."  
(Consider: Where are you struggling to follow the Lord's instructions? Ask the Lord to help you follow Him better.)
- "Believers are called to tell others of the things God has done."  
(Consider: In what ways are you telling others about the Lord? How can you participate in teaching the next generation? Ask the Lord to help you do this either in your home, your church, or your community.)
- "Believers can trust that God will do what He says He will do."  
(Consider: In what areas do you need to more fully trust the Lord? Ask the Lord to give you the strength and courage to trust Him.)

Notes: