

Explore the Bible: December 15

Delivered from Egypt • Exodus 12:21-32

By Wayne VanHorn



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Instruction (Ex. 12:21-23)

Moses was instructed to command Pharaoh to release the Israelites enslaved in Egypt. Moses obeyed. Each time, a plague followed Pharaoh's disobedience. During the time of the plagues, Moses' obedience was met with stubbornness from Pharaoh and often dismay from the people he sought to deliver.

Pharaoh was instructed to let God's people go, but he declined to release the Hebrew slaves. Each refusal brought judgment on the Egyptians (Ex. 7:14-10:29). Pharaoh's obstinacy carried a high cost for him and his people.

The Israelites were given specific instructions from God through Moses regarding the Passover meal and the blood of the Passover lamb. Their compliance resulted in the averting of the tenth plague from their homes. Obedience resulted in deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Note the difference in God's "passing through" the Egyptians in judgment and His "passing over" the Hebrews in deliverance (Ex. 12:23).

The same is true for us today, when we take God at His word, He delivers us from the judgment of our sins. Our Passover lamb is Jesus. His blood washes away our sin. His righteousness puts us in a right standing with the Father. Obedience to the Word of God becomes the hallmark of the Christian life.

Celebration (Ex. 12:24-28)

People tend to celebrate the significant events of their lives, like birthdays, anniversaries and spiritual birthdays. However, no event is more important than when God delivers His people. Thus, the Hebrews were commanded to celebrate the Passover permanently. Their deliverance from Egyptian bondage was accompanied by their eventual deliverance into the promised land. Once in the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants, the Hebrews were to remember the Lord's salvific work on their behalf. The entrance into the land of Canaan fulfilled that promise; the Israelites were bound to keep the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:25).

An often-overlooked aspect of the annual Passover meal was the intentional inclusion of the children in the ceremony. Exodus 12:26 indicates that the children would ask, "What does this ritual mean to you?" The fact that the ritual was to be an annual event indicates that each generation of Israelites were to contemplate the significance of the Exodus event anew.

Moreover, the fathers would respond to their children's questions by recounting the initial event when God "passed through" the Egyptians in judgment, but "passed over" His people in deliverance (Ex. 12:27a). The initial command to keep the Passover ritual induced in the Israelites a humility and a reverence. They bowed down to Yahweh and worshipped Him (12:27b). Those reactions, humility and worship, were to characterize the Passover throughout history.

Exodus 12:28 serves as an effective reminder of the importance

of obedience to God's instructions. The Israelites went and did what God had told them to do. "They did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron."

Victory (Ex. 12:29-32)

The last verses of today's lesson supply the specifics of the deliverance. Judgment came at midnight and touched every level of Egyptian society. Not even the Pharaoh, in his elaborate and luxurious palace, was spared. The Egyptians suffered the loss of their firstborn. Pharaoh's firstborn all the way to the firstborn of the captive in the dungeon. Even the firstborn of the Egyptian cattle died. This graphic description serves to show the thoroughness of God's judgment.

The mention of the "firstborn" is intentional and significant. In Exodus 4:22-23, the Lord referred to Israel as His "firstborn son." Pharaoh's strong refusal to obey the Lord and to release God's "firstborn son," the people of Israel, meant that judgment would come against Pharaoh and his people in the form of the death of their "first born sons."

The title of this lesson is "Delivered from Egypt." However, the entire Exodus event points Bible readers to a greater deliverance accomplished by God's "one-of-a-kind" son, Jesus. Christ came to deliver people from their sins and from the concomitant judgment those sins would bring. When we receive Jesus in faith, we are delivered eternally.

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