

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 12:33-42

To understand more about the exodus of the people of God out of Egypt.

Read the Text:

The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. 35 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. 36 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. 37 And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. 38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. 39 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. 40 The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. 41 At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 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 (Exodus 12:33-42, ESV)

Study the Text:

The Exodus

The act for which this book is named finally occurs. After ten plagues, each with increasing intensity, culminating in the death of every firstborn Egyptian, Pharaoh is finally broken, relents, and lets Moses, Aaron, and all of the Israelite people and livestock go. Below is a breakdown of some of the key details in this passage.

A LITTLE HELP

There is a sense of urgency in the people of Egypt to remove the Israelites from their land. Verse 33 says, more literally: "The Egyptians pressured the people in order to get them to leave the land quickly because they said, 'We are all dead!'" Douglas Stuart suggests, "The point is that God used the Egyptians to help make the Israelites do what was still surely not an easy thing: to leave the country of their birth and the country their ancestors had occupied for 430 years."¹ God had told the Israelites to be ready for this exodus to happen. They were to prepare the lamb in a manner that didn't require cleaning dishes afterwards (Ex. 12:8-9). They were to eat the meal with their clothes and sandals on (Ex. 12:11). They were to do all things in a manner that would most easily allow them to leave when given the green light. Now, in addition to their preparedness, the Egyptians will serve as a practical help to get them out even quicker. There's almost a bit of irony in this. God has previously employed the hardness of Pharaoh's to prevent the Israelites from leaving Egypt; now, He's employing the urgency of the Egyptians to help speed up their exit. In fact, the speed in which they leave is

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 of The New American Commentary, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and Kenneth A. Mathews (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 295.

reflected by the fact that they don't even have time to take the dough out of their bread bowls (Ex. 12:34). They have to wait until after traveling out of the land to bake the unleavened bread (Ex. 12:39).

PLUNDER

Verses 35 and 36 also indicate that the Egyptians responded positively to God's command to the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for jewels and valuables before they left (Ex. 3:21; 11:3). The Egyptians were not hostile to these requests because "the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians" (Ex. 12:36). This is an example of a kind of grace towards the Israelites that elevated them in the sight of their oppressors. They not only plundered the Egyptians, but did so without an ounce of force.

A MIXED MULTITUDE

Verse 37 records the number of Israelites that came out of Egypt "from Ramses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children." Note that it is not unusual to count only men in a headcount (For an example, see: *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* in Mark 6:30-44). One of the most interesting verses in the entire book of Exodus, however, is found next. In addition to the million plus Israelites that were going to come out of Egypt, we are given this small little added detail in verse 38: "A mixed multitude also went up with them." What are we to make of this? Who is the mixed multitude?

This refers to a large, ethnically diverse group of non-Israelites who decided to leave Egypt alongside the Israelites, some of which were Egyptians, although it likely also included other nationalities that did not stem from Jacob. This in some way prefigures the words of Ruth to Naomi: "Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth. 1:16). While this group was likely a mix of other semitic ethnicities, we know almost certainly that some of them *were* Egyptians. For example, in Leviticus 24:10, it says: "Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father *was an Egyptian*, went out among the people of Israel." We know that at some point there was a co-mingling of Egyptians with Israelites, likely from the Exodus, people who abandoned the Egyptian way of life after witnessing firsthand the power of the LORD over Pharaoh. Keep in mind, there was not a household in Egypt that did not suffer loss in the tenth plague (Ex. 12:30). That means that even in spite of the loss of a loved one, some Egyptians chose following the LORD responsible for such loss out of Egypt rather than staying.

AN ALLOTTED TIME

Verses 40 through 42 indicate that the allotted time for Israel in Egypt was approximately 430 years. The unfortunate rendering of some English translations makes it seem like the Israelites were in Egypt for exactly 430 years to the day, but that is not the way the Hebrew reads. The referent to "on that very day" is the Passover, not the starting point of the 430 years. In other words, on the exact day of the Passover, the Israelites left. There were no intervening days between when they celebrated the first Passover followed by the tenth plague and when they left. The plague occurred, and that very night Pharaoh told them to leave, and that very morning they left.

Why is this timeframe important? Consider for a moment the length of the Israelite occupation within the borders of Egypt. 430 years is roughly 14 to 15 generations, which first of all explains how the original 70 people (Ex. 1:5) could turn into over one million people in their departure. Moreover, the period of 430 years is a substantial time within a set culture. For example, the amount of time between the European settlement of the first colonies in the United States to now is less than 430 years. The first English settlement in the Americas was the *Jamestown Settlement* in 1607. *The American Revolution* didn't occur until the late part of the 18th century, with the *Declaration of Independence* being signed in 1776. The growth in population between the Jamestown Settlement and the Declaration of Independence gives further credence to the grow

of the Israelite population in the 430 year span of its Egyptian occupation. History estimates 350 people in 1610 in Jamestown and by 1770 the population of the thirteen colonies surpassed two million people.

With that perspective in mind, consider how drastically America has changed in the merely 250 official years it has been in existence. Now consider the same cultural drifts within Israel during this Exodus timeframe. They would have been more than accustomed to life in Egypt. All of the generations except the first generation would have identified Egypt as home, regardless of the stories they were told. To leave Egypt and go back to a land promised to them in a story from centuries ago would have required tremendous faith. The presence of the plagues, then, was as much for the Israelites as it was the Egyptians. The Israelites needed to be sure that moving into an unknown land occupied by foreign peoples was going to be not only worth it, but actually possible. Seeing God knock down the most powerful man on earth (Pharaoh) gave them that assurance: "If God can bring down Pharaoh, He can bring down anyone," is likely what they would have been thinking.

What About Now?

One takeaway is the way in which the sovereign LORD is able to accomplish His purposes through people. We saw this in the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and again here with the Egyptians aiding the Israelites to leave hastily, even surrendering their treasures voluntarily. God will accomplish His purposes and no one stands in His way. Another takeaway is the reality that being humbled by God, even in devastating loss, can lead people to surrender to Him. Some of the Egyptians who were no doubt touched by the loss of the tenth plague, still chose to follow Him out of Egypt and into the promised land as a descendant of Abraham, not by flesh but by faith (Rom. 9:6-8).

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 12:33-34. What did the Egyptians do in response to the tenth plague? How did this actually help the Israelites? What does the dough in bowls indicate about the speed at which the Israelites fled?

2. Read Exodus 12:35. What did Moses ask the people to do? Were they obedient to this end?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 12:36. How did the LORD bring favor to the Israelites in their requests for treasures and jewels from the Egyptians?

2. Read Exodus 12:37. From where did the Israelites journey and to where did they go? How many men? Did this include women and children?

Day Three

1. Read Exodus 12:38. Who are the “mixed multitude?” Did this include Egyptians as well? (See Leviticus 24:10)
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2. Read Exodus 12:39. What does this passage accomplish in the narrative?
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Day Four

1. Read Exodus 12:40-41. How many years did Israel sojourn in Egypt? To what does “on that very day” refer?
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2. Read Exodus 12:42. What did the LORD do for His people throughout the night? Why is this significant?
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Discuss the Text!

Week 27 Discussion: Following in the Face of Loss

In the “mixed multitude” of followers that left Egypt with Israel, Egyptians were present. Given that every Egyptian house was affected by the tenth plague, this means that there were some Egyptians who even after losing a loved one felt it was in their best interests to leave Egypt and follow the LORD responsible for the plagues. Following God, after being greatly humbled to the point of loss, is not only possible but commonplace in Scripture. God brings us to a place of powerlessness and gives us the opportunity to follow Him, the only One with actual power and control. Talk as a group about the ways in which God has humbled you and it has actually strengthened your faith.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever suffered loss due to the disciplining hand of God? Talk about that experience, and what you learned from it.
2. Why does loss embitter people towards God sometimes?
3. How can loss actually strengthen one’s faith?
4. What role does pride and humility play in the way we respond to loss?
5. “Pride blinds us from seeing reality for what it really is. Humility takes off the blinders.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
6. If you were an Egyptian who had lost a loved one on the night of the Passover, would you have followed them out of Egypt or stayed? Why or why not?

Takeaways:

1. The Israelites and a mixed multitude fled immediately following the tenth plague and Pharaoh’s release.
2. The Israelites sojourned in Egypt for a total of 430 years.