

Exodus 11-12

Study Outline

Launching question

Describe an especially important event in your life: what made it important, and how does its importance affect you now?

Our passage today focuses on the event that is to affect every year of Israel's history from now on.

The story so far ...

What does God want in Exodus 1-11?

Why hasn't that happened by Exodus 12?

How do the plagues fit in with that?

Read 11:1-12:28

What is similar about this final plague? what is different?

Who is affected by it? (cf 11:5f; 12:29-30)

What will this final plague mean for Pharaoh? ... and for Israel?

Isn't this a particularly gruesome plague: why kill the firstborn? (cf 4:22-23)

If the 'firstborn' represents 'and all the rest as well', why kill the firstborn?

Were the Egyptians right in 12:33 to think that they are all doomed?

How does 12:12 help to explain what is going on? how is God judging?

How does this picture of God's judgment (12:29-30) affect my view of God?

From 12:21-23, what caused God's judgment to 'pass over' a house?

Why must blood be shed? didn't God know which house was Israelite?

Why do you think God chose this as the way Israelites could escape death?

Why is the size of the lamb so important (cf 12:4)?

Why do you think God wants the Passover to begin every year (12:2)?

Do you think Christians should celebrate the Passover? why / why not?

What does it teach Israel about herself (more than just 'we were rescued')?

How do your answers remind you of what happened when Jesus died?

- lots of answers ... list lots of parallels

What is 1 Peter 1:18-19 and 1 Cor 5:7 telling us?

So how does Exod 11-12 help us to understand the gospel more?

What should be my reaction to the God who's ransomed me this way?

OPTIONAL

Read 12:29-42

EXTRA

What should Israel learn from the Exodus about ...

... God?

... redemption?

... judgment?

... themselves?

What should we learn from the Exodus about these things?

Read 14:31, the summary verse of this section: is this the right reaction?

Is this our reaction to God and his gospel?

Exodus 11-12

Study 5

T H E G O D W H O S A V E S

Summary

Exodus is the story of God showing us what he is like: he is the God who rescues his people. He does this in faithfulness to his promises, for his own glory, and out of sheer mercy and kindness to those he has chosen. We should expect to know our God better through reading this book.

The story so far

Sometime in the early second millennium BC, out of the blue, God promised Abraham that through his family he would undo the **curse** of the Fall, and instead bring **blessing** to the entire world. Part of this plan was a promise that, having made them a strong nation, he'd give them a wonderful land to live in. It has now become clear that being forced from that land because of a famine, and thereby ending up enslaved to Egypt was all part of this plan (cf Gen 15:13-15).

God intends to use this situation to rescue Israel. The patriarchs could not have fully understood him as the God 'who brought you out of the land of Egypt' (20:2), but now he will reveal himself this way, as 'the LORD' (6:3-8).

How he will bring them out is miraculously, by a single act which is both their salvation and God's judgment on Egypt (7:4 cf 12:12). The first nine plagues are Egypt's probation: God patiently delays their deserved judgment (anticipated since 4:22-23), so that his wrath only falls after every chance to repent is spurned. When the tenth plague comes, its terribleness will teach Israel something about the basis on which her salvation can occur: blood must be shed for there to be rescue.

Theme Sentence

God saves his people by the sin-removing shedding of blood.

Ideas for application

- understanding the Passover should help me to understand the wonderful gospel more: what should be my reaction to a God who has ransomed me through 'the precious blood of Christ ... a lamb without blemish' (1 Peter 1:18-19)?
- redemption on this scale is something that God must do for me. What I should do is 14:31 ... fear him, and believe in him.
- when God's judgment falls, it is horrific. It's worth considering how the picture of God's judgment in Exodus 12 should affect me. (Cf how the NT often tells Christians to 'remember what you were': why?)

Commentary

4:22-23 is the place to turn for the rationale behind this last plague. The underlying issue is **ownership**: who is the God and King of Israel – Pharaoh or the Lord? God's claim is that Israel is 'my people'. And because Pharaoh would not free God's firstborn son Israel, God in judgment claimed the firstborn son in every Egyptian family. The 'firstborn' represents the rest (which is how first fruits of grain and flock were viewed in Israel's ceremonial law later).

The life of the firstborn was to be forfeit for two reasons: first, to say that God could legitimately claim every creature as his own (for the whole lot is his cf 9:29); second, to say that every sinful creature stands under his judgment (and as all have sinned, Israel deserves the judgment no less than Egypt). They are right in 12:33 to think that they are all doomed.

11:2-3 Pharaoh represents human power set against God and his people, but in the end, he (12:31-32) and all nations (15:14-16) must give in. In fulfilment of God's promise of 3:22, Israel will leave Egypt like a victorious, conquering army (cf 12:35-36): God reverses their fortunes from poverty to enormous riches. As 15:1-18 explains: God is the warrior who had fought for them (1, 3, 4, 6-12): they just had to watch (14:13-14)! Cf Study 6.

11:4-6 None of the earlier plagues had touched the Israelites, but in the tenth and final plague, every firstborn will die (cf 12:22b). So there is something different going on in this tenth plague ...

The point is to reveal to Israel that her redemption is not simply release from slavery, but also escape from judgment (12:12). They deserve God's judgment no less than the Egyptians, but somehow the lamb's blood would 'cover' the believing/obedient Israelite so they could escape. 12:7f explains how this works.

12:2f The events which are about to occur are to mark the beginning of every Hebrew year, and thus to shape every year of their history from now on. The repetition of regulations through these chapters is an indication of how important the events will remain, foundational to their self-identity (as well as to knowing the Lord).

12:7f The only way to escape from the judgment of God is if blood is shed. God's provision of the Passover Lamb makes clear that the demands of God's justice must be met if mercy is to be shown: it's not that God simply overlooks sin. In every house there was to be a death that night (cf 12:30b): either the death of the firstborn (12:29-30) or of the lamb (8-11). The blood on the doorposts showed the angel that a death had already taken place (12:13).

The key idea is '**substitution**' which lies behind all the Bible's talk

of atonement: debt is not swept under the carpet, but cancelled by an equivalent payment. There is substitution. Hence the selection of a precisely equivalent-sized lamb (12:3-4): the name and the need of each individual in Israel was 'counted into' the lamb.

The lamb died instead of the oldest son, and therefore also in the place of the others represented by the oldest son. Israel then, in the symbolism of the Passover, was freed not just from bondage but also from death, the guilt and penalty of sin (cf 13:11-16).

This theme of substitution can be seen elsewhere in the Bible too. For example, no sooner is the tabernacle completed (Exod 40:33) than Moses is unable to enter it (40:35). But immediately afterwards (Leviticus 1:1-2) comes a voice offering blood-shedding as the way for sinners to come near. The blood of sacrifice wins 'satisfied acceptance' by a holy God, and confers the right to approach him. It also helps to explain NT references to redemption (eg Mk 10:45): Jesus' death exactly matches the price tag of our redemption (cf 1 Peter 1:18-19) as he dies in our place.

12:8f As Israel ate the lamb, they 'participated' in the salvation it achieved (cf 1 Cor 10:14-18). Eating the lamb (as in later 'peace offerings') is a mark of the restored fellowship with God that comes through atonement God provides (cf comments re 12:43-44)

They ate in travelling clothes because God's promise is so sure: he will lead them out. Faith is present as the Israelites obey (12:28), but it is especially evoked once they are free and see the totality of what God has done for them (14:31). Then they celebrate as they retell what the covenant God has done (Exod 15 cf Study 6).

12:40-42 The Exodus is God's doing: he watched ... he brought them out. The obvious route out of Egypt is not the one God chooses (13:17). God is still revealing himself (as we'll see in Study 6).

The significance of the 430 years (ie four generations?) is that God is keeping his promise to Abraham in Gen 15:13-16. He will achieve what he's promised that he will do. But why the delay? Why were the patriarchs not allowed to possess the land he promised them? And why was Israel brought into Egypt? Answer: God intended it all so that he could reveal what was to be the only way into his kingdom. The only way is by a miraculous, sin-removing redemption from the bondage that holds us and keeps us outside. This is just as true for always (and us) as for Israel. God's good in this is to bring about the saving of many people (cf Gen 50:20), which must be done by him, and in his way.

12:43-44 The Lord insists that no foreigner eat of the Passover unless they are circumcised. This reinforces the strong link between the Passover and the nation now coming into being: to share in the meal is to join the people.