



**CHRISTIAN
ENDEAVOUR**
for Christ and the Church



Nation in Slavery

Passover and Exodus

Knockout and Victory

Exodus 11:1 – 12:42

Teaching Aim

To recognize the greatness of God and His care for His people.

Setting the Scene

The championship fight between Moses and Pharaoh has reached the final round. Pharaoh had entered the contest expecting an easy victory, enhancing his reputation as a great ruler, but he has lost every round (quickly review the 9 plagues so far) and he is now on the ropes with God preparing the knockout blow as the final round begins. As Moses gives warning of the terrible tenth plague, God is also preparing His people to be ready to move on the victory march to freedom. In these last dramatic and activity-filled hours of the Israelite enslavement in Egypt, four things take place.

The Pronouncement

Read Exodus 11:1-10. Moses announces to Pharaoh the impending death of the first-born sons of all Egyptians. Still trying to keep control of events, Pharaoh does not realise this is his final chance and he fails to respond. So Moses leaves in great anger (v8) as he knows that God is not bluffing and there will be great sorrow in Egypt. The responsibility for the coming retribution lies with Pharaoh and those who support him.

The Preparation

Read Exodus 12:1-14. God gives Moses and Aaron strict instructions for the preparation of a special meal, the Passover meal. Every Israelite family must carefully follow God's directions. It is a highly symbolic meal in every way and it would be the final meal eaten by the Israelites in their captivity as slaves in Egypt. Part of the preparation included marking the doorposts and lintel of their homes with the blood of the lamb they had killed for the meal. It would identify them as God's people in the coming hours. The Israelites were told to celebrate this meal for ever (v14), so Jewish families still gather together each year for a Passover meal. It is kept in the same manner as the first Passover in Egypt (v8) as a way of remembering what God did for them. At the meal there is roast lamb to remind them of the sacrifice, bitter herbs to recall the bitterness of slavery and unleavened bread to indicate that the people had to be prepared to leave quickly. It is significant that the Passover was the last meal eaten by Jesus with his disciples (Mark 14:12-26).

The Passover

Read Exodus 12:29-33. Promptly at midnight, the Lord struck down all the first-born sons (v29). Not one household escaped so every Egyptian family was torn with grief, from the highest to the lowest (v29). With his privileged position, Pharaoh had probably avoided the worst of the other plagues but he couldn't escape this one. He too lost his eldest son and heir. There was no-one for Pharaoh to turn to for help. It was a knockout blow for him. The Lord God had triumphed over Pharaoh as well as over all the gods of Egypt as He had said He would do (v12).

Because the Israelites had obeyed God's instructions and identified themselves as His people by putting blood from the slaughtered lamb around their doorframes, God 'passed over' their homes and no Israelite died. The Passover was the final act in God's plan to set His people free from their slavery in Egypt.

The impact of the death of the first-born was so great that Pharaoh told Moses to take the Israelites from his land, and this time it was just as Moses had asked in the first place. There were no strings attached – all the Israelites and their animals were to go (v32). The ordinary Egyptians urged them to leave quickly (v33) and were willing to give them some of their wealth to encourage them to do so (vv35-36).

The Procession

Read Exodus 12:37-42. The move to freedom began. The Israelites were ready to leave and perhaps Moses wanted them to get on their way as soon as possible. Could Pharaoh be trusted to keep his word? Time would tell. Moses and the people set off with joy and enthusiasm for they were on their way to freedom from oppression and slavery, and God was with them.

Summing up

The plan of God for the rescue of His people had been completed. It began with a child saved from the River Nile and was finalised with the whole of the Israelite nation beginning the march to a new and promised land. It was accomplished only through God's supreme power guiding one man, Moses, and demonstrating His unsurpassed greatness through His control of His creation in the miracles of the plagues. He is a God who still seeks to save His people from any kind of enslavement or bondage today through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resources

Discussion

- Compare the events of the last week in the life of Jesus (from His entry into Jerusalem to the Resurrection) with the 4 things which happened in the last hours of slavery of the Israelites in Egypt.
- To what extent do you think that God's people today, the Church, must be a people on a journey?

Prayer points

Pray for:

- Those setting out on new ventures in their life – new homes, new schools, new jobs, new friendship
- People 'in slavery' to alcohol, drugs, violent temper, anger, greed, jealousy
- Christians held in prison or under house arrest because of their faith.