

The Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt

Exodus 12:37-51

Exodus 12:37-51 - *Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. **38** A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock. **39** And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.*

***40** Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. **41** And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. **42** It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.*

***43** And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. **44** But every man’s servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. **45** A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. **46** In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. **47** All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. **48** And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. **49** One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”*

***50** Thus all the children of Israel did; as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. **51** And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.*

Background Notes

The Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt was a mass movement of people of historic proportions and significance! Based on the round number of 600,000 men (v37), we can estimate that at least a couple of million people left Egypt. They left the area of Raamses in the Nile Delta Region, and a “mixed multitude” left Egypt along with them (v38). This mixed multitude would have included Egyptians and maybe other peoples who had settled in the Nile Delta region, and probably some other slaves who were from the land of Canaan as well. In Numbers 11 we read the fact that this “mixed multitude” living in the midst of Israel caused some serious problems.

Biblical scholars debate the date of the Exodus. The conservative view dates the Exodus in 1446BC because of the biblical data. 1 Kings 6:1 is especially significant: *“And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.”* Using this historical data, a simple calculation places the Exodus in 1446 BC.

The 430 years of bondage (Exodus 12:40-41) is the same figure given in Galatians 3:17. It doesn’t contradict the rounded off figure of 400 years that is given in Genesis 15 and quoted in Acts 7.

Doctrinal Points

1. **There is a spiritual lesson associated with the mixed multitude.**

The mixed multitude (v38) living in the midst of Israel would later become a serious problem, because the mixed multitude was a major factor in the grumbling and complaining of Israel in the wilderness (Numbers 11). There was certainly a spiritual lesson there, but there’s also a spiritual lesson about the grace of God here in the mixed multitude in Exodus 12. God made it possible for **anyone** to leave Egypt who wanted to leave Egypt. This was certainly the grace of God extended to the Egyptians (and other non-Israelis) who lived in Egypt.

Some people think that God’s grace extended only to Israel in the Old Testament period. Think again! The grace of God was extended to the cruel Assyrian Empire at the time of Jonah. The grace of God was extended to the Babylonian and Persian Empires through the testimony of Daniel, who held a high office in both empires. And here we see the grace of God extended to Egyptians and others who lived in Egypt. During the seventh plague of hail, the Egyptians who feared the word of the Lord and brought their cattle under shelter were delivered from that plague. So now the god-fearers in Egypt were delivered from Egypt. The grace of God was extended to the mixed multitude. **There is a spiritual lesson associated with the mixed multitude.**

2. **There is a spiritual lesson associated with the roast lamb and unleavened bread.**

In the first half of this chapter we saw the spiritual pictures (or types) of both the Passover Lamb and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Now let’s expand those spiritual pictures further.

In reference to the Passover, the children of Israel were not only to sacrifice the lamb, but they were to cook and eat the lamb as well. Exodus 12:8, *“And they shall eat the flesh of it in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs shall they eat*

it.” Here we have a spiritual picture of the believer “feeding” on Christ. Christ is not only the *means* of our salvation, but He is our spiritual sustenance and source of spiritual strength as well. We “feed” on Christ as we read and study and meditate on God’s Word.

The Passover lamb was roasted with fire, speaking of the crucible of the Cross. The bitter herbs here speak of the bitterness of Christ’s suffering. Verse 6 says that not a bone of the lamb was to be broken. This Scripture was fulfilled at the crucifixion, when the Roman soldiers did not break the legs of Christ. *“For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.” (John 19:36).*

All the Israelites who came out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus ate unleavened bread. Exodus 12:39, *“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 tarry...”* The children of Israel ate unleavened bread because they left Egypt in haste, without time for the action of yeast -- but there is a spiritual lesson here as well. Throughout the Bible, leaven is symbolic of evil and wickedness. If we have been redeemed from bondage to sin and Satan by the blood of the Passover Lamb, we should separate ourselves from sin. We should live our lives in separation from sin. That’s the spiritual lesson in the unleavened bread. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 says, *“therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* **There is a spiritual lesson associated with the roast lamb and unleavened bread.**

3. There is a spiritual lesson associated with the ritual of circumcision.

In verse 43 we read that every man who kept the Passover and ate the Passover lamb had to be circumcised: *“...for no uncircumcised person shall eat it.”* However, if an uncircumcised servant or a sojourner or stranger wanted to participate in the Passover, they could do so -- as long as they underwent circumcision. Do you see the spiritual lesson? Circumcision is a picture of “cutting off the flesh,” or cutting off the activity of the sinful nature. When Christ died for our sins, He died because of our sinful nature as well. So when we accept Christ as our Savior, we are “spiritually circumcised.” That’s the meaning of Colossians 2:11: *“In Him [in Christ] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”*

Now, as believers, we are to practice spiritual circumcision—that is, we are to cut off the activities of the sinful nature. In fact, 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 says that if we don’t judge ourselves and don’t practice spiritual circumcision, we should not partake of the Lord’s Supper. *“Therefore whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that*

bread and drink of that cup. For he who east and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

As the sons of Israel had to be circumcised in order to partake of the Passover lamb, so people today who partake of the Lord's Supper must be believers who have undergone the spiritual circumcision of Christ. In addition, they should be believers who are practicing spiritual circumcision — putting the spiritual knife to the activities of the flesh. **There is a spiritual lesson associated with the ritual of circumcision.**

Practical Application

Remember, the Lord keeps His promises!

"And it came to pass on that very day that the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." (v51). The Lord had promised the children of Israel that He would bring them out of Egypt, and He did! The Lord keeps His promises. In spite of what looked like an impossible situation, and in spite of some doubts on the part of the children of Israel, the Lord kept His promise!

The Lord keeps His promises today as well. The Lord has given us many promises, and the Lord will keep all of them! Let's take just one example. In John 14:2-3 Jesus said, *"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* There's a great promise, isn't it? The Lord is coming again for us some day! He promised -- and remember -- **the Lord keeps His promises!**