



THE EXODUS PART THREE:

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

INTO THE WORD

LESSON 12

- **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS LESSON:**
 - The Red Sea parts
 - The journey in the wilderness begins
 - God provides for the physical needs of His people
 - Moses learns to shepherd and interceded for his people
- **BIBLICAL THEMES:**
 - Destruction of sin and bondage
 - Baptism and Rebirth
 - Relying on God
- **WORLD EVENTS:**
 - 1500 BC: Thutmose III rules Egypt. Empire reaches its height.
 - 1440 BC: Exodus from Egypt. (The Exodus began 480 years before Solomon began to build the temple.)
- **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES:**
 - Exodus 7:9-12; 11-14
 - Hebrews 9:22
- **FOR FURTHER STUDY:**
 - Bernard, David K. The New Birth Experience. Word Aflame Press: Hazelwood, 1984.
 - Sarnum, Nathan. Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel.

INTO THE WORD

LESSON 12

THE EXODUS PART THREE: THE BIRTH OF A NATION

Introduction:

The first Passover and the departure from Egypt mark Israel's birth as a nation. There are multiple scriptures throughout the Old Testament that identify the nation of Israel with their deliverance from Egypt (Leviticus 19:36, Psalm 81:10, Micah 6:4, for example). Prior to this moment in their history, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were a people, yet they hardly knew what that meant. As God worked through Moses following the exodus, He forged an identity for the Israelite people. In their miraculous deliverance, they experience the life-sustaining power of their God as the foundation of their lives. It is in the wilderness that they receive the moral, civic, and ceremonial laws which consecrate them to God and separate them from all other nations on earth at this time.

The Passover and the exodus are, therefore, to the Old Testament what Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is to the New Testament. Both events create a radically new situation and opportunity. Yet just as only those who respond in faith and obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ can truly enjoy the benefits of this new birth experience, so only those who displayed true faith in and obedience to the Lord were really his people. Throughout the book of Exodus, not only do we see the Lord creating an identity for His people, but we watch the heart of a Godly leader develop as Moses learns to guide, shepherd and ultimately intercede for his people.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Many of us struggle with our identity and sense of security today. 1 Peter 2:10 tells us that once we have received New Testament salvation, we are "the people of God". What does it mean to have our identity in Christ and be among God's people?

Into the Word:

1. Consecration and Memorials

By redeeming (buying back) the nation of Israel from slavery and sparing each firstborn from death, the Lord became each person's new owner. Unlike their harsh Egyptian taskmasters, however, the Lord had a purpose and a plan to bless and prosper His people and to offer them as an example to all other nations. The Lord consecrated His people to Himself; dedicating them to Himself and thereby making them holy. He reminded the Israelites of His claim on them by commanding them to consecrate the life of each firstborn male to Him (Ex. 13:1-2, 11-16). This reminder to the nation of Israel, coupled with the decree to annually celebrate the Passover, served to consolidate the Israelite's sense of identity.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- 1 Peter 2:9 states that New Testament Christians are a "chosen people...kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." Obviously the New testament no longer requires all the sacrifices of the Old Testament law. How do Christians demonstrate that they have been bought with a price and that they are a "holy nation"?

2. The Crossing of the Red Sea

As the Israelites set out on their journey following the first Passover, they immediately experienced God's presence in a tangible way. The Lord himself guided them --a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night--showing them which direction to take :

- Exodus 13:21-22 (NLT)
²¹The LORD went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. ²²And the LORD did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 (NLT)
¹I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. ²In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses.

However, once they left Egypt, Pharaoh's stubbornness and pride prompted him to command his armies to join him in pursuit of the Israelites. When the Israelites realized the Egyptians were following them, they became fearful and complained to Moses. However, Moses explained to them that Pharaoh's audacity would once again enable God to demonstrate His sovereign power over one of the earth's most powerful civilizations.

- Exodus 14:5-9, 11-14, 19-31 (NLT)
⁵When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all those Israelite slaves get away?" they asked. ⁶So Pharaoh harnessed his chariot and called up his troops. ⁷He took with him 600 of Egypt's best chariots, along with the rest of the chariots of Egypt, each with its commander. ⁸The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, so he chased after the people of Israel, who had left with fists raised in defiance. ⁹The Egyptians chased after them with all the forces in Pharaoh's army—all his horses and chariots, his charioteers, and his troops. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon.
¹¹and they said to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? What have you done to us? Why did you make us leave Egypt? ¹²Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'" ¹³But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. ¹⁴The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

Whenever the power of Pharaoh's earthly kingdom asserted itself, God showed himself mighty. This was truly a lesson of obedience for the Israelites. They had to learn not to trust in what they saw with their natural eyes--the Egyptians armies gaining ground--but to trust in the promise of deliverance from the Lord given to them by Moses.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Can you think of a time in your life when you have had to trust in the promises of God despite dire circumstances. What lesson is this teaching us?

When it looked as though the Egyptian armies would overwhelm the Israelites, God performed a great miracle. The pillar of fire separated the Egyptian and Israelite camps throughout the night so no harm could befall the Israelites. Moses then stretched forth his rod over the Red Sea according to the word of the Lord and the waters began to part allowing the Israelites to cross over on dry land.

- ¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to the rear of the camp. The pillar of cloud also moved from the front and stood behind them. ²⁰ The cloud settled between the Egyptian and Israelite camps. As darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night. But the Egyptians and Israelites did not approach each other all night. ²¹ Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the LORD opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land. ²² So the people of Israel walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

Pharaoh's heart must have been so enraged for seemingly without thought he immediately pursued the Israelites into the sea. However, before dawn came the Lord began to intervene. Scripture says that he "twisted their chariot wheels" making them difficult to drive. God then commanded Moses to once again "raise his right hand over the sea". As he did this the waters crashed down on the heads of all the Egyptians and everyone of them were drowned in the waters.

- ²³ Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers—chased them into the middle of the sea. ²⁴ But just before dawn the LORD looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw their forces into total confusion. ²⁵ He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. "Let's get out of here—away from these Israelites!" the Egyptians shouted. "The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!" ²⁶ When all the Israelites had reached the other side, the LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back and cover the Egyptians and their chariots and charioteers." ²⁷ So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the water rushed back into its usual place. The Egyptians tried to escape, but the LORD swept them into the sea. ²⁸ Then the waters returned and covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived. ²⁹ But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides. ³⁰ That is how the LORD rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. ³¹ When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the LORD had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

God's dramatic demonstration of power caused the Israelites to respond with spontaneous praise! Moses sang a song to the Lord, and Miriam, Moses' sister, lead the women in a dance of praise (Exodus 15:1-20). Their hearts overflowed with adoration for their savior who had not only delivered them from slavery but had utterly destroyed their oppressors. They had fully experienced the mighty, saving power of their God. 400 years of slavery was washed away in a moment!

The life of slavery and bondage that Israel experienced in Egypt is a type of our slavery to sin before we experience redemption through the blood of Jesus.

Romans states:

- Romans 6:16-17 (NLT)
¹⁶ Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. ¹⁷ Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you.

Paul also likens our sinful nature to a "body of death" (Romans 6:6), and goes on to explain how this body of sin is destroyed through our identification with Christ's death in baptism:

- Romans 6:3-11 (NLT)
³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

According to Paul, the body of sin is destroyed when we are baptized "into Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:3). In the same way that the Egyptian oppressors were destroyed in the waters of the Red Sea, our sinful past is blotted out in the waters of baptism through the saving blood of Jesus Christ released by his crucifixion. To fully appreciate the symbolism of the waters of the Red Sea overwhelming and destroying the Egyptians oppressors, we should note that the word "baptism" comes from the Greek word, "baptizo", meaning "to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe".¹ When we are fully submerged in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ in baptism, we are no longer held captive by sin; sin is no longer our master and we are set free to serve God:

¹ The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon. www.Biblestudytools.com

- Romans 6:22 (NLT)

²² But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.

Just as God called Israel to a life of consecration and new identity in him as he delivered them from Egypt. The Christian is called to a new life consecrated to Christ.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Consider 1 Peter 3:20-21. Do you see a connection to this scripture and the story of the Red-Sea? Consider how the water “saved” Israel, yet “destroyed” their oppressors. (Psalms 74:12-14) How does this relate to New Testament baptism? (Acts 22:16, Colossians 2:11-12)

3. God Provides for the Physical Needs of Israel

The fifteen chapter of Exodus outlines the miraculous story of God’s destruction of Pharaoh and his armies. We see the glorious celebration of praise that Israel offers to their savior. Yet, within a few short verses, we see Israel complaining and grumbling against Moses as they have traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water (Ex 15:22). Having just witnessed God’s almighty provision for their lives three days ago, it is hard to believe the faithlessness the Israelites display. Surely the God who brought them out of Egypt could provide for their physical needs?



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- We criticize Israel’s lack of faith, but in which ways are we like the nation of Israel?
- How can we guard against doubt and “grumbling” against God or the spiritual leadership He may have placed over our lives?

After three days of travel, Moses led the Israelites to Marah where there was water. However it appeared that the water at Marah was “bitter” and undrinkable. As the people grumbled to Moses, he once again cried out to the Lord (Ex 15:25). The Lord then showed Moses a tree, and asked him to place that tree in the bitter waters. When he did so, the waters became sweet and the people were able to drink. Once again the Lord marked this event as a memorial in the life of the nation of Israel:

- Exodus 15:25-26

²⁵ So Moses cried out to the LORD for help, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. Moses threw it into the water, and this made the water good to drink. It was there at Marah that the LORD set before them the following decree as a standard to test their faithfulness to him.²⁶ He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and keeping all his decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you."



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- How might this episode at Marah be likened unto the cross of Calvary? (Isaiah 53:4-5)
- What do you think the Lord was teaching Israel during this episode?
- Why do you think it was significant that after the episode at Marah they entered Elim?

Significantly, after the Lord delivered this message, the Israelites entered Elim, where there were 12 wells of water and 10 palm trees (a desert oasis) and here they made their camp.

Israel had to rely on God for their very sustenance. He demonstrated that He would protect them from all manner of disease, if they would keep themselves separated and consecrated to Him. God was preparing them to receive his law, teaching them that He would provide for His people and that his law would not only ensure physical health, but spiritual blessing. Perhaps the beautiful desert Oasis of Elim was an image of God's promise to His people.

Having found respite at the waters of Elim, the Israelites continued their journey. It was not long until the Israelites were complaining again. This time it was their hunger that caused them to grumble and even long for the land of Egypt:

- Exodus 16:2-3 (NLT)

² There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron.³ "If only the LORD had killed us back in Egypt," they moaned. "There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death."

Again, having witnessed God's ability to make the bitter waters at Marah sweet, not to mention the parting of the Red Sea, it seems impossible that the Israelites could doubt their destiny and wish they had remained in slavery.



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- How often do our carnal desires prompt us to forget what God has done for us? We live in a very "instant" generation.
- The devil has a way of making the "world" or perhaps even our past sinful lives appear appealing. What strategies can we use to resist this temptation to look back?

Again the Lord provided for the physical needs of His people. In the evening, He provided quail for them to eat and in the mornings he provided bread (manna meaning: "What is it?"; described as tasting like coriander seed wafers made with honey (Ex 16:31)). The Israelites were given strict instructions from the Lord regarding His provision. They were to gather as much as they needed for their family for each day. Moses instructed them not to keep any left over for the following day. On the sixth day they were required to gather twice as much, for on the seventh day they were to rest as it was the Sabbath. Needless to say, some did not listen to Moses and attempted to keep some for the following day. In the morning they found what they had taken rotten and filled with maggots. Similarly some went out to gather on the seventh day, despite Moses' direction to the contrary. However, when they went out, they found no manna. (Exodus 16:4-31).



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- In the context of the Lord redeeming (buying back) His people from Egypt and the fact that they now belonged to Him, what lesson do you think He was trying to teach Israel with the instructions He gave them regarding the gathering of the manna?
- What relationship are you seeing between obedience and blessing?

4. The Water from the Rock and the Defeat of Amalek

Continuing on in their journey from the wilderness of Sin, they set up camp in Rephidim. Once again there was no water to drink, and once again the Israelites murmured against Moses. Their anger seems particularly fierce, as Moses believes the people were ready to stone him (Exodus 17: 4) Once again the Lord provides for His people, instructing Moses to take his rod and strike the rock in Horeb, promising that water will then come from the rock allowing the Israelites to drink. We witness Moses' frustration with the people, naming the place Massah and Meribah because of the anger of the people of Israel and their faithlessness toward their God (Exodus 17:2-7). God once again demonstrates his power, showing Israel that He will meet their every need if they will fully rely on Him.

Next, we witness the first battle that the Israelites encounter in the wilderness. The nation of Amalek came to fight with Israel at Rephidim. Moses instructed Joshua to select men to fight the battle, while Moses (along with Aaron and Hur) climbed the hill with the rod of God in his hand. When Moses held up the rod, the nation of Israel would prevail in battle. As Moses' hand grew weary, he let down his hand and immediately Amalek prevailed. Aaron and Hur assisted Moses and supported his arms as he held high the rod of God. With the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to keep the rod of God in the air, and Joshua won the battle against Amalek (Exodus 17: 8-16).

Clearly the battle belonged to the Lord and there Moses built an altar to the Lord and called the "Jehovah-nissi: The Lord is my banner" (Ex 17:15).



Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- What do you think the picture of Moses holding up the rod of the Lord as Israel prevailed in battle signifies?
- In which ways had God demonstrated his provision for Israel in these first days in the wilderness?
- How do you think God was preparing His people as a nation in giving them such clear examples of His provision?

Conclusion:

God had redeemed His people and begun to prepare them for nationhood under His rule. The first Passover and the exodus, coupled with his provision of food and water within the harsh wilderness landscape, gave the Israelites a picture of His grace and mercy toward them. He was also teaching them the benefits of obeying His ordinances and preparing their hearts for the giving of the moral, judicial and sacrificial law. He was visually demonstrating their need to fully rely on Him if they were to be a true Theocracy, and a nation set apart from all others on earth.