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Lesson 1
Deliverance from Egypt
 Exodus 12:1-14

This message begins a new series on “The Wilderness Wanderings of the Children of Israel.” We will be dealing with an extremely practical section of Scripture that has much to say to every individual Christian. God wants us to learn to walk the life of faith and to learn from the failures of the children of Israel.

There are three basic reasons we should study the wilderness wanderings. First, we will learn something of the principles and problems of leadership as seen in Moses who was a leader *par excellence*. Second, we will learn from the congregation of Israel how not to walk the Christian life. God sent the Israelites into the desert to test them and they flunked the test because they refused to operate on faith in the living God. We in the church are to learn from the children of Israel and make sure we do not follow their example of unbelief. “***For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope***” (Rom 15:4). The things, which happened to Israel in the wilderness, are for our instruction in the age of the church. “***Now these things happened to them (Israel) as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come***” (1 Cor. 10:11). The unbelief of Israel also serves as a warning to professing Christians.

“Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest; just as He has said, ‘As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,’ although His works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb . 4: 1- 3).

Third, the things that happened to Israel in the exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness serve as types or shadows of Christ, salvation, or Christian living. Everything was designed in the Old Testament to point forward to Christ and the church age. “. . . ***and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ***” (1 Cor. 10:4).

THE PROMISE OF A FINAL PLAGUE Exodus 11:1-10

“Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.’” God had previously brought nine devastating plagues upon the land of Egypt and Moses had faced Pharaoh and said, “***Let my people go!***” Pharaoh, however, resisted all admonitions and warnings and continued to oppress the children of Israel. Then God said, “***One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and Egypt.***” One more heavy blow had to fall on this hardhearted monarch and the land so Pharaoh would be compelled to let Israel, the object of God’s sovereign grace, go. Pharaoh had to learn that God can grind to powder and brings down to the dust the haughtiest spirit. “. . . ***He is able to humble those who walk in pride***” (Dan. 4:37). This final plague would sign the death warrant of Egypt’s first-born.

“Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold.’ And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians.” God told Moses to have all the Israelites go to the Egyptians and ask for silver, gold, and clothing. The amazing thing is that the people would give these articles gladly. We are told that the Israelites literally “plundered” the Egyptians. God in His sovereignty moved on the Egyptians to do what is humanly impossible--to have a whole nation be willing to part with much of its material wealth to help its enemies. Furthermore, this plundering was a just payment for 430 years of hard slave labor by the Israelites.

“Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.” Pharaoh hated Moses, but even Pharaoh’s servants saw how great Moses was and that God was with him and Israel. Hatred blinded Pharaoh to the truth.

“And Moses said, ‘Thus says the LORD, “About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sits on the throne, even to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the first-born of the cattle as well.” This plague would take in death the male first-born child of every family in Egypt. The first-born child was very precious in oriental societies, for the first-born was not only heir of a double portion of the father’s inheritance but represented special qualities of life and strength. This plague would sap the very fiber of Egypt’s society. It would strike at midnight. There was probably an interval of some days before this plague occurred so the Israelites could make final preparations and so Pharaoh might have time to ponder the fate that awaited him and his people. All he knew was that the plague would occur at midnight; he did not know the day. What agony Pharaoh must have gone through as he waited in fear! Judgment fell on mighty Egypt, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. This judgment was also to fall on the first-born animals because universally throughout Egypt the people worshiped animals as their gods. Each district had its sacred animals.

“Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again.” A mournful wail would resound all through Egypt because no family would be exempt from this plague of death.

“But against any of the sons of Israel a dog shall not bark, whether against men or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” This plague would make a clear division between Egypt and Israel. It would demonstrate that God is always for His people and against the enemies of God’s people. God always makes a distinction between the saved and the lost. It is God who makes this distinction, not man.

“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness’” (2 Tim. 2:19).

“And all these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, ‘Go out you and all the people who follow you,’ and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in anger.” Things would get so tough in Egypt that Pharaoh’s servants would come and bow before Moses. Moses made this warning to Pharaoh fully expecting Pharaoh to let the people go so as to avoid this terrifying plague. However, Pharaoh’s proud heart would not yield, not even to save the lives of millions of first-born children in his kingdom. This provoked Moses to holy anger. Though he was the meekest of all men on the earth, Moses could be riled to anger. Holy anger against sin is a mark of a good spiritual leader.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that my wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.’ And Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of the land.” God sovereignly hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he was more determined than ever to keep Israel in Egypt. This verse does not say that God removed all restraints from Pharaoh so he acted completely on his free will. No, it says God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, which resulted in a further hardening of Pharaoh’s own heart. This was a hardening God did because he is God, and we must always let God be God!

THE PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER Exodus 12:1-14

“Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt . . .” In order for Israel to be exempted from the plague of the first-born, God instituted the Passover for Israel.

“This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you.” According to the Egyptian civil calendar, this was the seventh month of the year. But God was about to do something new. He was to bring into existence the nation of Israel through the Passover. Technically, the birth of

the nation of Israel began in Exodus 12. God had Israel set aside the Egyptian civil calendar and begin a new religious calendar. This would be the first month in the Jewish calendar, which is called *Abib* in the Hebrew and *Nisan* in the Greek and is equivalent to April in our calendar. Israel's religious history as a nation would begin officially on April 14, 1447 B.C. The Jews would begin a new life of freedom after having been in bondage for 430 years in Egypt. The Jews' time as a nation was reckoned in terms of regeneration rather than natural birth. The nation of Israel is often a type or shadow of the church. We must remember that real life begins for the sinner when he is born again by God's Holy Spirit. ***"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come"*** (2 Cor. 5:17). The new birth brings a person from slavery in sin to freedom in Christ, and that person gets a whole new start in life.

"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their father's households, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb." The means by which God would provide deliverance for Israel was through the slaying of a lamb. The point here is that every Israelite was to participate in the Passover Feast. The only way any Israelite could escape the misery, sorrow and heartache of the first-born plague was to partake of the Passover.

This whole Passover Feast has tremendous typical significance for it refers to Jesus Christ and the salvation He provides for sinners who trust Him. ***"For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed"*** (1 Cor. 5:7).

"Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or the goats." A lamb was to be offered as a substitute for Israel.

This lamb represents Jesus Christ. ***"The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"*** (John 1:29) Since it was to be without blemish, it also represents Jesus Christ who was the perfect, sinless sacrifice. ***". . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ"*** (1 Pet. 1:19). ***"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"*** (2 Cor. 5:21).

"And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight (between the evenings)." The lamb was to be taken on the tenth of April and observed for four days and on the fourteenth of April it was to be slain "between the evenings," which was between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Christ actually entered Jerusalem four days before the Feast of the Passover. On April 14, A.D. 32, Christ died as a sinners substitute at 3:00 p.m.

"Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, 'Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'" (Matt. 27:45-46)

"Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two door posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it." The blood of this slain lamb was to be sprinkled on top of the door and on both sides of the door. Christ shed His blood that we might be saved.

". . . being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Rom 3:24-25).

It is interesting to note that in the sprinkling of the blood the motion made would be that of the sign of a cross.

"And they shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." The lamb roasted with fire reminded the Israelites of the judgment they were escaping. The unleavened bread spoke of fellowship with God, for any leaven spoke of evil. The bitter herbs reminded them

of their years in bondage in Egypt. The roasting with fire typically speaks of Christ's exquisite sufferings, even the death of the cross. ***"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God . . ."*** (1 Peter 3:18).

"Do not eat of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire." It is very difficult to get the typical significance here but there must be one.

It should also be noted that no bone of this sacrificed lamb was to be broken. ***". . . nor are you to break any bone of it"*** (Exodus 12:46). This is a type of Christ who had no bone broken in His body when He hung on the cross as the crucified Savior.

". . . but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. . . For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken'" (John 19:33, 36).

"Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD'S Passover." The Jews were to eat the lamb fully attired and ready for a quick departure from Egypt. The Israelites were to shake off the yoke of Egypt and forsake the sins of that land. There was to be anticipation and excitement about this event and they were to be ready to leave immediately for that new land.

"For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both men and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I am the LORD." The plague of death was not only to strike down every first-born male child in Egypt but also every animal. This plague was designed by God to show the impotency of Egyptian idolatry, for it was ***"against all the gods of Egypt."*** There was Min, the god of procreation and production. Isis was the goddess of fertility and the power to produce offspring. Hathor was the goddess of love who attended the birth of children. This plague would implicate these gods and show the total incapability of the gods of Egypt to protect them from such a tragedy.

"And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." The Lord passed over Israel when He saw the blood. Only the blood saved Israel from the plague of death. Unless the Israelites had met this condition of placing the blood above and on the sides of the door, they would have seen their first-born of every family die as well. They had to apply the blood to be delivered.

The principle is very simple. One must apply the blood of Christ personally for one to be saved. Although Christ died for sinners, this is absolutely of no effect until a person accepts Christ and believes Christ shed His blood for him. ***"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses . . ."*** (Eph. 1:7). A person must not rely on his family heritage or church background or anything else for salvation. He must apply the blood of Christ to himself personally and then he escapes God's plague of the second death.

"Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance." The Passover was to be a "permanent" or "eternal" memorial for the Jews. There was only one Passover, but the Jews were to observe the Passover yearly through the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is spoken of in Exodus 12:14-20 and Exodus 13:1-10. In the Feast of Unleavened Bread, bread was used in the ritual and wine was substituted for the actual killing of a lamb. Again this was to be an "eternal" ordinance. The Jews have observed this ritual right up to the present by using bread and wine. However, the eternal significance is found in its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The church observes the Lord's Table with bread and wine. The Jews looked forward to the slain Lamb. The church looks back to the slain Lamb.

THE PLAGUE AND PLUNDER Exodus 12:29-36

"Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the

first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle.” The death angel, called the destroyer, struck the first-born of Egypt. There was no respect of social or civil status in this plague. This plague even came to Pharaoh’s first-born. The death of Pharaoh’s son was not a silent and painless one. Pharaoh must have been terrified when he was awakened to the blood-chilling cry from his son, and after that he was lying stone silent. What must have passed through Pharaoh’s mind as he carried the limp body of his son to the Egyptian embalmers to prepare him for burial! The son whom he had cherished, the one born of the gods, was white and lifeless. What explanation would this mighty king offer in defense of the gods and himself when not only he but also every family in Egypt was helpless in this tragedy?

This horrible plague was not without rationale and justification, for years before this time another Pharaoh had commanded every male Jewish child to be killed, hoping to keep down the multiplication of the Jews. ***“Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, ‘Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive’”*** (Exodus 1:22). Now God strikes down the first-born of Egypt in retaliation. The mill of God grinds slowly, but it grinds surely. This plague merely shows us that God does visit the iniquity of fathers upon their children, and He is not unrighteous when He takes vengeance.

“And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.” Throughout all Egypt, wailing could be heard. Pharaoh himself probably wept uncontrollably. If Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh on the throne at this time, then this Pharaoh had only one son and suffered the loss of his only heir to the throne.

“Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, ‘Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also.’” While Pharaoh may have found escape from the other nine plagues, or perhaps provided rationalizations of them, this plague he could not escape. The hard heart and stubborn will of Pharaoh had been broken. Pharaoh told Moses to take the people and go. There were no qualifications, no concessions, no conditions, and the departure was to take place on Moses’ terms. The extent of Pharaoh’s humiliation is seen in that he says to Moses, “And bless me also.” For a moment, Pharaoh acknowledged the God of Israel as real and powerful.

“And the Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, ‘We shall all be dead.’” The average Egyptian was frustrated and just wanted the Israelites out of their land. They felt death was imminent for all of them. Fear causes people to do strange things, as we shall see.

“So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with the kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.” They did not steal or so much as raise a sword, for everything was given to them. Out of fear and a sense of guilt, the Egyptians gave Israel everything they requested. They were ready to do anything to get them out of Egypt. Israel left Egypt a wealthy nation, for it says they “plundered” the Egyptians. All this, however, was small payment for over four hundred years of slavery.

This shows us that God can move the unsaved man as He pleases. He is the LORD and He does His perfect will in heaven and earth.

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What has Thou done?’” (Dan. 4:35).

THE PASSING FROM RAMESES TO SUCCOTH Exodus 12:37-38; 13:17-18

“Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. And a mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds a very large

number of livestock.” The children of Israel began to move out of Egypt. The rendezvous point for all the Israelites was Rameses, a city built by Jewish slave labor. The journey from Rameses to Succoth was about fifteen miles and was on a well-traveled trade route that would lead them directly to Canaan. It was about two hundred miles from Rameses to Canaan, the Promised Land, and it would take about eight to ten days to travel. However, it would take longer for the Jews because they had now grown to a nation of around two million. Notice, there were 600,000 men on foot and this would be men over the age of twenty. This did not include women and children under twenty nor the mixed multitude of non-Jews. Nor did it include the 22,000 Levites whose responsibility was entirely spiritual. The rate of growth among the Israelites was truly a miracle, for 430 years before this time they entered Egypt with only seventy people.

The sons of Israel had to be well organized to make this trip. There were three basic reasons: 1) Israel had been preparing for about one year for the exodus from Egypt, for the time from the first plague to the tenth plague was about one year; 2) Moses was an organizational genius, for it is believed by many that when he was in power in Egypt he reorganized Egypt administratively, which resulted in Egypt becoming the leading power of that day; and 3) God gave them special grace so as to get organized.

When they came out of Egypt, apparently all the Israelites were in excellent health, for the King James Version says, **“There was not a feeble person among them.”** They also came out of Egypt with a “high hand”; that is, they came out boldly, confidently and deliriously happy and excited. There must have been shouting, laughter, weeping, and excitement as Israel moved out for the Promised Land.

“Now it came about when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, ‘Lest the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt.’” There were several routes from Egypt to Canaan. The children of Israel, by going to Succoth, had decided to go the northern route along the seacoast of the Mediterranean, which was only about two hundred miles away. However, it was Philistine country and the Egyptians had many fortifications all along the Philistine border. Israel would have come into conflict with the troops of Egypt and been annihilated, for they were not yet trained for war. They had been slaves, not warriors. There was also the southern route to Canaan that actually crossed the Sinai Peninsula to southern Canaan. This was a very active trade route.

However, God kept the Jews from both of these routes. He kept them off the northern route to avoid war and off the southern route to avoid falling into materialism.

“Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.” God had other plans for the infant nation of Israel. Instead of taking the people the northern route to Canaan, which would have taken no more than three weeks because it was the shortest route, God led them out into the wilderness. God had lessons He wanted to teach the Israelites and they could only be learned in the desert wilderness. They had to learn two things: 1) Because they were not disciplined in war and the art of survival, they had to learn to fight in order to take the land of Canaan; and 2) Because they were a new nation, they had to learn to trust God for everything. They had to learn to wait on God; they had to learn patience; they had to learn to trust God completely. So God took them off the beaten path and put them on the long road of the wilderness to prepare them spiritually to fight future battles and to trust God explicitly. God sent the Israelites into the wilderness to test them and humble them.

“And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:2-3).

The trip from Egypt to Canaan through the wilderness should have lasted no more than two years (some think just one year). All that God needed to teach Israel should have taken two years at the most. God’s emotional will for Israel was that they should have been spiritually prepared in two years and in the land of Canaan soon after. But because of disobedience and unbelief, the nation wandered forty years in the wilderness before God

could accomplish His purposes through them. Even then, God had to wait for one generation to die before they entered the land. God gave Israel opportunity after opportunity to trust Him and they failed every test. Consequently, they helplessly wandered in the desert for thirty-eight unnecessary years.

What does all this teach us as Christians? God often takes us into the wilderness of trials and pressures to prepare us spiritually to fight future battles. This also teaches us that God's ways are not our ways and that the shortest way to victory is not always the best way. God desires to teach us as Christians many spiritual lessons, and He can only do this by taking us into wilderness periods so we will learn to trust Him more. We must learn that it is God who leads us.

“I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself” (Jer. 10:23).

“The steps of a man are established by the LORD: and He delights in his way” (Psalm 37:23).

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8: 14).

Furthermore, God wants every Christian to operate on faith and when we do not, we may simply find ourselves wandering in the wilderness of life, out of it spiritually, and missing much of God's spiritual blessings for us.

THE PASSING FROM SUCCOTH TO ETHAM Exodus 13:20-22

“Then they set out from Succoth and camped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness.” The sons of Israel now turned from the established route to Canaan, turning south to Etham, which sits on the edge of the wilderness. All the green vegetation faded away into waste and sand. Yet, even in this God had a purpose, for Pharaoh would conclude that Israel was hopelessly entangled in the wilderness without arms and could easily be overtaken and beaten.

“And the LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.” The Lord Himself led the sons of Israel in a supernatural way by the pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night. The pillar has been called the Shekinah Glory. Apparently, the pillar did not join Israel until they were in Succoth. The presence of the pillar was a constant source of comfort and assurance to the Israelites who undoubtedly were having some anxious moments. At any time of day or night an Israelite could see this pillar, knowing that God was with them. When God began to lead by the pillar, Israel's walk of faith really began. They were to depend totally on this pillar for guidance through the wilderness.

Have you ever wondered why God manifested Himself as a pillar of cloud and fire? Egyptian armies were led by fire at night and clouds of smoke by day. This is how signals were given from the commander in the front of the army to all the other troops. God merely took the manifestation of cloud and fire to show Egypt and Israel that He was the commander and leader of all Israel.

CONCLUSION

If you are without Christ, I have some questions for you. Have you trusted Christ? Have you accepted the Lamb's blood sacrifice for you? Have you personally applied the blood of Christ to your own life by faith?

The Egyptians who did not apply the blood were judged and those Israelites who applied the blood of the sacrificed lamb were saved. The only way to be saved is to be covered by the blood of Christ. Do you want to escape the judgment of hell? God says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you!”