

# EXODUS

## THE GOD WHO RESCUES

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### SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 12:43-51

To understand more about the institution of the Passover meal.

#### Read the Text:

*And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, 44 but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. 45 No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. 46 It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. 47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. 48 If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. 49 There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you." 50 All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts. (Exodus 12:43-51, ESV)*

#### Study the Text:

### The Statute of the Passover

Verses 43 through 51 backtrack to before the Exodus on the night of the tenth and final plague when the Passover was first instituted and provides further instructions on the way this meal should not only be conducted for the first time, but for every time after (Ex. 12:14). Below is a breakdown of some of the important instructions found in this text.

#### **NO FOREIGNERS ALLOWED**

The major theme throughout this passage is the emphasis on excluding foreigners from this practice. What is meant by this? First, it is important to understand that terms like "foreigners" and "natives" do not merely pertain to geographical or ethnical ties to a people group. To be an Israelite meant much more than a bloodline. Anyone who was not circumcised into the covenant people of God were seen as foreigners. So we should not confuse this law to mean that any non-pure-blooded Jewish person was excluded from the Passover. On the contrary, a "mixed multitude" was with the people and seemed to be included (Ex. 12:38). The "foreigner" was anyone not circumcised and therefore not a part of the covenant community. Below is a more in-depth analysis of who could and could not participate in the Passover meal.

#### Slaves Allowed (with Circumcision)

Verse 44 includes purchased slaves, assuming they had been circumcised. One must separate the modern, colonial understanding of slavery to what was practiced in the ancient world at this time. Slavery could be either good or bad, depending on the care of the master, and especially the New Testament included injunctions against masters who did not care for those under their charge well (Eph. 6:5-9). Bear in mind, the Israelites themselves had experienced slavery under the oppression of Pharaoh (which is what led to the Exodus to begin with) and even they continued the practice of slavery in a more acceptable sense. While slaves would have been rejected from most sacred or special rituals in other communities, they are not excluded in Israel so long as they worship the one true God, Yahweh, and are circumcised into the community just as it was required of any other male.

### Hired Workers Not Allowed

Hired workers, on the other hand, were not allowed to participate. While the slave belonged to the household of the master, hired workers were simply people who showed up and performed a job for pay. They were not beholden to the faith or convictions of those they served. Therefore, they would not have been circumcised nor seen as a real part of the community. They were not treated poorly or looked down upon. Healthy religious exclusion is not harsh or negative towards outsiders, but simply protective of the sacredness of practice for the insiders. No one is forced to join for the sake of joining; they are only expected to join if they want to further participate in rituals such as this one.

### Sojourners Allowed (with Circumcision)

Showing hospitality to sojourners (travelers) in the ancient world was expected. Without the modern machinations of trains, planes, and automobiles, it would take substantially longer to get from one place to another, and travelers often relied upon the generosity and hospitality of others to take them in and provide for them as they traveled. In the event that the Passover was being observed while a sojourner was staying with a family, the sojourner was not permitted to take the Passover unless they were circumcised. This happened more often than you might think. Israel was eventually commanded to be “a light to the Gentiles” (Is. 49:6), and this included a kind of evangelism to those they cared for or took in.

### **ONE HOUSE, INSIDE THE HOME**

Verse 46 specifies the location of the Passover meal to be *inside* a home, and specifically *not outside* (no *barbecues*, unfortunately). There are at least a couple of reasons for this. For one, being inside would prevent outsiders or even animals from walking up and taking food while it was unattended. Being inside limits who can “participate,” which is a crucial aspect of this meal. Moreover, being inside prevented the possibility of dropping some of the roasted meat on the dust of the ground and thus sullyng that which is sacred.

### **NO BROKEN BONES**

The last part of verse 46 also includes the detail to avoid breaking the bones of the sacrificial lamb being consumed in the Passover meal. No other details are provided here or in any other place in the Old Testament for why this injunction is given. It is likely to communicate the unbroken nature of the community when they participate in this ritual. Unity is important to God in the Old Testament people of God as well as the New Testament people of God in the church, and this serves as a type that prefigures the unbroken body of Christ on the cross (Jn. 19:36), the ultimate, final Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Even now, centuries prior to the coming Messiah, God is foreshadowing pictures of the Messiah to His people unbeknownst to them.

### **FULFILLMENT**

Verses 50 and 51 serve as a kind of fulfillment passage to this section, reiterating that everything that was commanded of them was done, and that God accomplished precisely what He said He would by bringing them out of Egypt on the very night of the final plague.

## What About Now?

One takeaway is the exclusive nature of God’s covenant community. Being a part of God’s family requires us to conform to His statutes, and not the other way around. While the Gospel is an inclusive message for all who are broken to come to Jesus, it is exclusive in that it dictates what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in our participation with God through Christ. Another takeaway is the way in which God’s community breaks down the human barriers that are otherwise held up by people, slavery being the chief example here in this passage. Slaves were not permitted to participate with masters in much of anything in

other communities, but in God's community, slaves could participate in even the most sacred rituals like the Passover meal, assuming they were willing to join the covenant community by faith and obedience to circumcision. The same is true today. While we don't have an established practice of slavery, we do exist in a world with "classes," and yet participation in God's community is free to all classes, assuming the participant is willing to bend to the statutes demanded of them by God.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Exodus 12:43-44. What does the LORD say to Moses and Aaron? What is meant by "foreigner" in this passage? (Hint: See above notes) Were slaves permitted to participate? Under what condition?

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2. Read Exodus 12:45. Why were foreigners and hired hands not permitted to participate in the Passover?

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### Day Two

1. Read Exodus 12:46. Where was this meal to be eaten? Why? Why were the bones not to be broken?

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2. Read Exodus 12:47-48. Who was expected to keep the Passover? What about sojourners?

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### Day Three

1. Read Exodus 12:49. What does the "one law" mean here?

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2. Read Exodus 12:50. Did the people of God listen to Moses and Aaron?

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### Day Four

1. Read Exodus 12:51. What did the LORD do for the people of God?

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2. Read 1 Corinthians 5:7. How does the Passover meal influence our understanding of Jesus Christ and the Lord's Supper?

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**Discuss the Text!****Week 28 Discussion: Inclusive and Exclusive**

It becomes clear after reading Exodus 12:43-51 that the invitation to participate in something sacred like the Passover meal was both exclusive and incredibly inclusive as well. On the one hand, foreigners and hired hands were not permitted to take it, presumably because they were not covenant members of God's family nor did they believe in or worship Yahweh. On the other hand, anyone willing to be circumcised and believe, including slaves, were permitted to participate. Talk as a group about how this same "inclusive and exclusive" reality is true for the Christian experience as well.

1. Icebreaker: What do you think about "exclusive" groups, in general? What are some examples of exclusive membership in groups today?
2. In what ways is Christianity exclusive?
3. In what ways is Christianity more inclusive than other groups?
4. Why is it important that Christianity remain exclusive in its demands?
5. Can you be a Christian and an adherent to another religion as well? Why or why not?
6. How does this topic inform your view of church membership?

**Takeaways:**

1. The Passover was *exclusive* in that it demanded faith and circumcision before participation.
2. The Passover was *inclusive* in that anyone willing to believe and be circumcised could participate.