Lesson: Exodus 12:29-42; Time of Action: 1445 or 1446 B.C.; Place of Action: Egypt

Golden Text: “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:40-41).

I. INTRODUCTION. As we study this week’s lesson, let us remember that the long, cruel Egyptian bondage of God’s people was divinely designed. God had told Abraham that His people would experience a lengthy time of affliction (see Genesis 15:13-14). The Israelites had been waiting for hundreds of years for God to deliver them. Now that time of deliverance had finally arrived. No doubt, waiting can be wearisome to our souls, but one thing that we can be sure of is that the God we serve is a God of suddenness. When He acts, no one can deny that it was Him because everyone will be able to see it.

II. BACKGROUND FOR THE LESSON. Moses and Aaron had been sent to Pharaoh to demand that he set God’s people
free from bondage, but he had no intentions of doing so (see Exodus 7:14-16). As a result, the Lord sent nine plagues in judgment of the Egyptians (see Exodus 7:17-25; 8: 1-11, 16-17, 21-24, 25; 9:1-6, 8-10, 13, 22-26; 10:1, 5-6, 12-15, 21-23). Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh after each plague demanding that Pharaoh let the Lord’s people go, but each time he refused (see Exodus 10:24-28). Finally, the Lord told Moses that He would bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and Egypt that would force him to let the Hebrews go (see Exodus 11:1). That plague would be the death of the first born in Egypt just as God had earlier revealed to Moses (see Exodus 4:21-23). Now the time had come for that plague. God told Moses to tell the people that at midnight He would go throughout all of Egypt and all the firstborn in the land shall die from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the maidservant, and all the firstborn of animals (see Exodus 11:4-5). In chapter 12, God told Moses that this same day and month that they would leave Egypt would be the first month in their calendar going forward (see Exodus 12:1-2). Then God instituted the Passover with Israel (see Exodus 12:4-6, 14-20) advising them that the blood from the lambs to be killed in recognition of the Passover was to be placed over the doors and along the two sides (see Exodus 12: 21-23). The Lord then said that this was necessary because when He passed through Egypt to smite the Egyptians, He would also pass over the houses where the blood was placed over the door (see Exodus 12:13). Moses then told the people that they were to continually observe the Passover and remind their children often why they celebrated it. Then the people worshiped God and went to do as He commanded (see Exodus 12:24-28). This is where our lesson begins.
III. THE FINAL PLAGUE OF JUDGMENT ON EGYPT (Exodus 12:29-36)

A. The death of the firstborn (Exodus 12:29-30).

1. (vs. 29). Our first verse says “And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.” The Lord had previously told Moses that around midnight He would strike dead all the “firstborn in the land of Egypt” (see Exodus 11:4-5). It was now “midnight” and God was true to His word. At that time “the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon.” Not only was Pharaoh’s “firstborn” who would be in line to sit on his throne died, but even the “firstborn” of those who were prisoners in the Egyptian “dungeon.” Exodus 11:5 says that death would come “even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill.” Regardless of a person’s rank or status, the “firstborn” in his family was killed. No Egyptian home was exempt from the death of their “firstborn” male. In addition, this plague of death would include “all the firstborn of cattle” or livestock.  

Note: Although no one knows for sure, archaeological finds indicate that Thutmoses III was Pharaoh in 1446 B.C., the date most Bible scholars accept as the date of the
Exodus based on I Kings 6:1. That verse tells us that it was 480 years from the Israelites leaving Egypt to the 4th year of Solomon’s reign. Solomon’s reign began in 970 B.C., and if we subtract four years we get 966 which would be the 4th year of Solomon’s reign and 480 years after the Exodus. Again, this would place the Exodus in 1446 B.C. during the reign of Thutmoses III who reigned from 1485-1431 B.C. There were three distinct phases to his rule. First: From 1495-1464 when he was a baby, his step-mother Hatshepsut ruled with him as co-regent for 21 years. Historically, this period is generally ascribed directly to Hatshepsut as Pharaoh, especially since she proclaimed herself pharaoh before she died. Thutmoses III was Hatshepsut’s step son and when her husband and step brother Thutmoses II died, she ruled until Thutmoses III grew up. Second: From 1464-1446 B.C. after Hatshepsut died, Thutmoses III ruled alone as Pharaoh for 18 years until the Exodus. Third: After the Exodus, Thutmoses III ruled another 15 years from 1446-1431 B.C. Instead of Thutmoses III, there are other scholars who wrongly agree that Ramesses II was the pharaoh at the Exodus which they place in 1270 B.C. They base this on a single piece of information from Exodus 1:11: “So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh (of the oppression) storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.” The argument they give to support this is as simplistic as it is wrong and goes like this: The Hebrews built the city of Raamses, therefore the pharaoh of the exodus must be a guy named “Ramesses II.” They fail to notice that
Joseph lived in the “land of Rameses” 400 years before Ramesses II was born. Genesis 47:11 says “So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered.” This means that the name Rameses predated Ramesses II by 400 years! The only other reason why these scholars place the Exodus in 1270 B.C. is because archaeologists who want to discredit the Bible make active attempts at destroying any possible connection between archaeology and Bible history! As further proof that Thutmoses III was most likely the pharaoh during the Exodus was the fact that he was great, powerful and prideful! He was one of the greatest and most powerful Pharaohs of Egypt. He is in the class of Herod the Great who ruled in Israel in 30 B.C.

Thutmoses III’s son, Amenhotep II, was small, insignificant and unaccomplished in contrast to his father. Prior to the Exodus, beginning in 1464 B.C., Thutmoses III made 17 consecutive military campaigns into the Promised Land and surrounding areas. His last campaign was 18 years after Hatshepsut died which is exactly the year of the Exodus, 1446 B.C. A coincidence? I don’t think so!

2. (vs. 30). This verse says “And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.” As a result of this final plague, “Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians.” Every
Egyptian in Egypt got up during the night, “**and there was a great cry in Egypt.**” God had foretold that there would be “a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more” (see Exodus 11:6). Again, God’s word had come to pass, for we are told that “**there was a great cry in Egypt; there was not a house where there was not one dead.**” There was not one household in which the firstborn had not died. Including the palace!

**B. Pharaoh’s insistence to Moses and Aaron (Exodus 12:31-32).**

1. (vs. 31). This verse says “**And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.**” Pharaoh had previously vowed to never again allow Moses to see his face (see Exodus 10:28). In fact, the king had threatened that if Moses ever did come before him again, he would be killed. But here we see how God overruled Pharaoh’s earlier threat. The Egyptian king was so distraught that he called both “**Moses and Aaron**” into his presence. He didn’t wait until morning; he issued the summons that very “**night.**” Pharaoh then told “**Moses and Aaron**” to “**Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.**” With the death of his firstborn son, Pharaoh intreated Moses to leave Egypt with his people, “**and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.**” The phrase “**as ye have said**” refers to Moses’ request to go into the
wilderness to serve the Lord (see Exodus 5:1; 7:16).

2. (vs. 32). This verse says, “Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.” Pharaoh also urged Moses to “take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone.” Earlier, after the plague of darkness, Pharaoh agreed to let the people go serve their God three days in the wilderness, but he wanted them to leave their flocks and herds in Egypt, probably to assure that they would return. But Moses refused to leave without their animals because they would be needed for the sacrifices (see Exodus 10:24-26). Therefore, the phrase “as ye have said” refers to Moses’ demand to take their animals with them. With his pride broken, Pharaoh finally gave in to God’s demands, allowing the people and their animals to leave Egypt. And to further demonstrate that this proud man was completely humbled before the God of Israel, at least for the time being (see Exodus 13:17-18; 14:5-9), he asked Moses to “bless” him or “speak well of him.” Because Pharaoh had taken God lightly and scoffed at His people, he had experienced God’s judgment. Now Pharaoh was asking for the Lord’s blessing. Most likely he wanted Moses to “bless” him so that he wouldn’t experience any further plagues. **Note:** This Egyptian Pharaoh is a prime example of pride and how destructive it can be. Solomon said it this way: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (see Proverbs 16:18). Pride has been the downfall of many people and led to sin entering the world (see Genesis 3:5-6). It will also lead to the destruction of Satan (see Isaiah 14:12-15).
Pharaoh’s stubborn pride in his power and authority cost him and his people tremendously. His nation was devastated and many of his people including his own son died because he was too proud to acknowledge the Lord God of Israel. There is a lesson here for us: we should never wait for God to humble us; we must humble ourselves before Him now (see Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11; James 4:6, 10; I Peter 5:5-6).

C. The desperation of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:33-34).

1. (vs. 33). This verse says “And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.” As already noted, Pharaoh wasn’t the only one affected by the tenth plague of death of the firstborn. Every Egyptian had experienced a great loss causing great panic. As a result, “the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste.” In other words, the Egyptians anxiously urged the Israelites to leave, desiring to send them out of the land quickly. The words “were urgent” suggests the idea of impatiently pressing on someone a particular course of action. The Egyptian people said the reason for wanting the Hebrews to hurry up and leave was the fear that “We be all dead men.” They didn’t want to suffer the same thing as the firstborn—death. The Egyptians were convinced that hurrying the Israelites out of their land was the only way to prevent any further deaths.
2. (vs. 34). This verse says “And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.” Since the Egyptians insisted that the Hebrews leave Egypt quickly, “the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.” In other words, since “the people” had to leave immediately, they didn’t have time to finish mixing the leaven into their bread dough so it could rise. So, they took the unleavened “dough” and their “kneadingtroughs” or mixing bowls and wrapped it “in their clothes” and put it on “their shoulders” in preparation to leave Egypt quickly.

D. The Egyptians show favor to the Israelites (Exodus 12:35-36).

1. (vs. 35). This verse says “And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.” Earlier, God had told Moses to tell the Israelites that after the final plague, the Egyptians would “thrust” them out, but every person was to borrow silver and gold jewelry from the Egyptians (see Exodus 11:2-3). So in obedience to Moses’ instructions, we are told that “the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.” The word “borrowed” here can be translated “asked” and should be understood that way.
2. (vs. 36). This verse says “And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.” Here we are told why the people were emboldened to ask the Egyptians for silver and gold jewels and clothing. It was because “the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required.” Earlier, during the burning bush experience, God had told Moses that this would happen (see Exodus 3:1, 21-22). And once again, God was faithful to His word. Since the Lord caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, the Egyptians “lent unto them such things as they required.” The word “lent” here means “to give” or “gave.” The phrase “such things as they required” refers to things the Israelites would need on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. With the silver and gold they could buy any needed provisions from traders. It should be noted that by this time not only did the people find favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, Moses was also recognized as very great in Egypt by both Pharaoh’s servants and the Egyptian people (see Exodus 11:3). This may have also played a part in the Egyptians freely giving the Israelites whatever they asked for. Moses, the writer of Exodus when describing the Israelites receiving goods from the Egyptians said “And they spoiled the Egyptians.” The term “spoiled” means “plundered” and describes a military action of a conquering army stripping its enemy of their goods. It was as if Israel had been at war with Egypt, was victorious, and gathered the spoils.
IV. THE EXODUS OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT (Exodus 12:37-42)

A. The Israelites leave Egypt (Exodus 12:37-39).

1. (vs. 37). This verse says “And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.” Now that they were free, “the children of Israel” began their journey at “Rameses” and continued to “Succoth.” The exact location of these cities is unknown today. However, it is believed that “Rameses” was in northern Egypt, north of Goshen where the Israelites settled in Egypt. “Succoth” is believed to be about forty or forty-five miles south east of “Rameses.” Moses, the writer of Exodus tells us that there were “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.” According to Numbers 1:45-46, the “six hundred thousand...men” were probably men twenty years old and older. In addition to these “men” there were also women and “children” which could have easily brought the total of Israelites leaving Egypt to more than two million people. That was a whole lotta’ people and only God could’ve taken care of them in what would eventually become 40 years of desert wanderings (see Numbers 14:31-34; 32:13; Deuteronomy 8:2).

2. (vs. 38). This verse says “And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and
herds, even very much cattle.” In addition to the more than two million Hebrews to leave Egypt, “a mixed multitude went up also with them.” These were probably non-Israelites who may have also been slaves, as well as some Egyptians. It’s quite possible that some Egyptians left with the Hebrews because they may have decided to follow Israel’s God after witnessing His plagues. This “mixed multitude” would soon become a pain for Moses, but the Israelites were responsible for most of the troubles and rebellion that took place in the wilderness. The “flocks, and herds, even very much cattle” that belonged to the Israelites and the “mixed multitude” were taken along as well.

3. (vs. 39). This verse says “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.” In verse 34, we are told that the Israelites were forced out of Egypt so quickly that they were not able to prepare food for themselves. As a result, when they stopped to eat, they “baked unleavened cakes” or yeast-less bread from the “dough” they had brought along when they left “Egypt” because the “dough” was “not leavened.” In other words, the “dough” had no yeast, so the “cakes” they baked was actually flat bread. The word “leaven” refers to yeast that was used to make bread rise. The “dough” was not “leavened” meaning it contained no yeast. This was because the people were pushed out of Egypt and didn’t have time to add leaven to the “dough” and wait for the “cakes”
or bread to rise to take with them on the trip. The phrase “neither had they prepared for themselves any victual” means that before leaving Egypt, the Israelites didn’t have time to prepare any food for themselves so all they had to eat for the time being was the “unleavened cakes.” The word “victual” means food. Bread was the main food for the Israelites as well as many other ancient peoples.

B. A Reminder of their bondage (Exodus 12:40-41).

1. (vs. 40). This verse says “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.” As Moses wrote the Exodus, he stopped here to remind his readers of the length of time that the Israelites were in Egypt. He wrote “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.” Since this verse uses the term “sojourning” with the phrase “dwelt in Egypt” instead of bondage or slavery, this time period of “four hundred and thirty years” most likely refers to the time beginning when Jacob and his family went to Egypt (see Genesis 46: 26-27) while Joseph was Pharaoh’s right hand man (see Genesis 41: 37-46) and does not refer to the actual time they were enslaved which was 400 years (see Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6). Note: There is much disagreement among scholars as to whether the Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt for 430 years, 400 years, 215 years or even less. The disagreement comes with how one understands Paul’s words in Galatians 3:1-17, and how the years are calculated based on certain passages.
Some scholars add up the years going back as far as Abraham and others only as far as Joseph. Having researched why there are different opinions as to how long the Hebrews were in slavery, until there is undeniable proof otherwise, for the purpose of this commentary, I accept what this verse says that the Hebrews were in Egypt for 430 years, 400 of those years as slaves.

2. (vs. 41). This verse says “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” Here we are told that the Hebrews were set free “at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day.” In other words, 430 years after Jacob and his family came to Egypt, to the very day, “all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” These freed slaves were so many that they are described as “the hosts of the Lord.” The term “hosts” has the idea of an organized army or a great number (see Genesis 21:22; 32:1-3; Exodus 15:4). Exactly 430 years from the day they entered Egypt, God’s people “went out from the land of Egypt.” These people hadn’t known anything but slavery, and now they were free. They were also starting on a new journey not knowing what the future held. Even though they were stepping out on faith, in the days to come their faith would be challenged.

C. A Reminder of their deliverance (Exodus 12:42). Our final verse says “It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the
land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.” Just as Moses reminded the freed Israelites of how long they had been in slavery in Egypt, here he reminds them of the importance of the night that God delivered them. Moses said that “It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt.” The “night” that the Hebrews left Egypt was to be “observed” or honored “unto the Lord” because He had brought them “out from the land of Egypt” and bondage just as He had promised Abraham centuries earlier (see Genesis 15:13-16). Moses went on to say “this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.” This means that going forward, every generation of Israelites are supposed to honor that particular night and make it a date for the annual celebration of God’s deliverance. God had already told the people that that night would be their first Passover and they were to continue to observe it every year to remind them that the Lord passed over them and killed the Egyptians (see Exodus 12:13-27).

V. CONCLUSION. The final plague which took the lives of Egypt’s firstborn finally got through to Pharaoh; he let the Israelites go. The Egyptians were so fearful that they urged the Israelites to hurry up and leave. Sometimes when we are teaching or sharing the gospel with someone, we may sense that the time is right for them to receive Jesus Christ. But we need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s guidance so that we
know when we should urge an individual to depart in haste from his or her slavery to sin, and when we should just present the gospel and not press for a decision. Remember, like Moses, our job is only to present the message, and it’s God’s job to deliver the person from their slavery to sin.