

The Army of the Lord – Exodus 12:41

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Ben Hur

1. The story of Judah Ben Hur is a timeless tale of one man's journey from slavery to freedom.
2. Ben Hur was a Jewish zealot at the time of the Roman occupation.
3. He wanted nothing more than to see the filthy Roman scourge scoured from his homeland.
4. But before he had a chance to become part of the revolt, he was falsely accused and arrested by the Romans, and ended up serving as a galley slave on one of the Roman warships.
5. Now, history tells us there was no lower or more torturous service in the Roman Empire than to serve as a galley slave – toiling at an oar and rowing those massive ships into battle.
6. But Ben Hur was blessed with a wild reversal of fortune.
 - a. the ship he rowed on was overtaken by some pirates.
 - b. in the ensuing battle, he was able to escape and jumped overboard
 - c. he found a piece of the sinking ship to cling to, and hauled another victim of the battle out of the water, saving him from drowning.
 - d. the man turned out to be a wealthy and powerful Roman, who promised Ben Hur that if they were rescued, he would reward him well.
7. The man made good on his promise, adopting Judah as his own son and taking him to Rome where he was trained in the art of war and became a skilled soldier.

B. Today

1. I'll stop the story at that point because it sets a good introduction for our study today.
2. The Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, so long hopped for, will finally take place.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 40-41

**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 [1]
armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.**

1. From the day Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt, until the day his descendants left, was 430 years.
2. And the family, which numbered some 70 souls at the beginning, has now grown into a nation of between 2 & 3 million people!
3. While the ruling dynasty of Egypt had been *favorable* to Jacob's family when they first migrated, a new dynasty of ethnic Egyptians *hostile* to Jacob's descendants had taken over and subjected the children of Israel to harsh bondage.
4. This has been the state of affairs for a couple hundred years, so that the people who left Egypt in the Exodus have known *nothing but slavery* all their lives.
 - a. their *parents* were slaves, their *grandparents* were slaves.
 - b. slavery is all they have ever known.
5. And this is why v. 41 is so remarkable –

B. This Is It!

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.

1. Catch the weight of these words! This is it – The Exodus!
2. The previous 12 chapters have been the set up for this moment!
3. And it's been some 400 years the children of Israel have been waiting for this, when they would leave Egypt and head back to the Land Promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.
4. Why, even for the last few weeks in *our study here*, we've been moving toward *this* moment.
 - a. this is what the calling of Moses and all the plagues have been leading to.
 - b. this has been the *very thing* Pharaoh has been resisting and so the terrifying troubles the kingdom has been put through descended upon it.

- c. but now, with the 10th and final plague, the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh is broken, and he sends word to Moses – “Go!”
- 5. And so, while the children of Israel are still partaking of that first Passover meal,
 - a. standing with their traveling clothes on, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in their hands,
 - b. the word is quickly carried down every street, along every alley and into the darkest warren of the slave camps – “Let’s move!”
 - c. “It’s time to depart. Grab your bags, you children, gather your flocks and leave – NOW!”

C. The Army

- 1. But there’s *one word* I want to ask you to take special note of.
- 2. It’s here in v. 41, THE verse which announces the Exodus.

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 _____

- 3. What’s the word?
- ARMIES of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.**
- 4. Who went out of Egypt? Were they slaves? No! – They were “the *armies* of Yahweh.”
- 5. Look at v. 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. [2]

- 6. The word refers to a group organized for battle.
 - a. different translations render it as “hosts” or “divisions”
 - b. but the Hebrew word carries the idea of *military service* –
 - c. it pictures a large group of people who are well ordered in ranks for the purpose of making war, if war is what’s called for.
- 7. I’ve noticed a bumper sticker more and more lately; maybe you’ve seen it too.
 - a. it says, “War Is Not The Answer”
 - b. now, I think I understand the sentiment *behind* that saying;
 - 1) peace *is* preferable to war,
 - 2) who would argue with that?

- c. but is it true that “War is not the answer?”
 - d. No – sometimes war is the answer!
 - e. sometimes, because we live in a fallen world with evil men who will only be restrained by the use of force,
 - f. war is necessary to resist evil, or to right some terrible wrong, some unjust state of affairs.
 - g. sometimes, the only way to real peace, is through war!
 - h. as it says in Ecclesiastes 3, “there’s a time for war, and a time for peace.”^[3]
8. But what I want us to notice here in our text, is that when God took His people out of Egypt, in *the very moment* of their deliverance, they went from being *slaves of Egypt*, to being *soldiers of God*!
9. It was crucial the people realize this, because it wouldn’t be long before Pharaoh *regretted* his decision to let them go and came after them to re-enslave them.

D. For Us

1. Friends, this is such an important insight and lesson for us to grasp.
 - a. you see, this isn’t just a story, an historical narrative about the children of Israel.
 - b. in speaking about the Passover, the Exodus, and the journey to the Promised Land, the Apostle Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 10:11

**Now all these things happened to them as examples,
[4]
and they were written for our admonition . . .
[our instruction!]**

- c. while the Exodus was a real historical event, it’s also a model or picture of us and our deliverance through Christ.
 - 1) the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt • we were in bondage to sin and death in the world.
 - 2) Pharaoh was a harsh tyrant who ruled Egypt and oppressed them • Satan is an evil tyrant who the Bible calls the god of this world and who opposes the people of God.
 - 3) they were protected from judgment and delivered from bondage by the blood of the spotless Passover lamb • we’re protected from judgment and delivered from spiritual

bondage by the blood of the sinless Christ, the lamb of God who takes away our sins.

2. Right here in v. 41 – there's something absolutely crucial for us to get our hearts and minds around.
3. If we do, it will revolutionize our lives!
4. It's this – at the very moment of their deliverance, they went from being a bunch of slaves, to being the army of the Lord.
5. The Passover, which made possible the Exodus, birthed a new people – *from slaves to warriors; from victims, to victors!*
6. What was true for them, is no less true for us.
 - a. as Paul said – they are the example, the template, the model for what God does through the death of the Lamb.
 - b. just as the children of Israel went in the moment of their deliverance from being slaves to being the army of the Lord,
 - c. so you and I experience the very same transformation the moment we're born again!
7. 2 Cor. 5:17

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. [5]

8. The moment we're born again, we go from being slaves to sin and death to being the children of God and free in Christ, with all the rights and privileges such adoption, such identity brings. [John 8:36]

E. The Glitch

1. Now, here's the glitch, the snag in all this –
 - a. while the children of Israel went from bondage to freedom, from being slaves to the army of the Lord, in an instant – while that was IN FACT their new identity,
 - b. how long do you suppose it took for them to accept & embrace it, seeing themselves that way and then to start living it?
2. Well, that's what the rest of Exodus, Leviticus, and especially the book of Numbers is going to tell us about!
3. And what we find is that it took quite a while for them *to be* who & what they were.

4. Though free, they kept *thinking* like slaves.
 - a. when the chariots of Pharaoh came after them, instead of saying, “Hey, we’re the army of Yahweh, the God who has just creamed Egypt!”
 - b. they quailed & quivered in fear, complaining to Moses that he’d just brought them out into the desert because there weren’t enough burial plots in Egypt.
 - c. it never crossed their mind to stand and fight!
 - d. don’t miss that – warriors, who never even stop to think about fighting their enemy!
 - e. why, they don’t even appear to have any *hope of escape* – they just start complaining, and say they might as well just have stayed in Egypt!
5. Later, after God had miraculously delivered them and then provided them with the daily manna and water, they again complained and started reminiscing about the good ole’ days in Egypt when they had such tasty foods as onions and leeks!
6. Though they had the visible evidence of God’s presence & leading in the pillar of fire and smoke, they complained yet again, this time about Moses’ leadership.
7. All of this complaining the children of Israel did is reflective of a slave-mentality.
 - a. slaves have a rotten deal, it’s expected they’ll complain.
 - b. the children of Israel had had an especially harsh bondage in Egypt and complaint had become a habit!
 - c. but the Exodus birthed a new nation, a new people, with a brand new identity.
 - d. they were no longer slaves – they were free,
 - e. and liberated into a new relationship with God that totally transformed who and what they were.
 - d. the problem is, they kept living out of what they had been, rather than what they were –
 - e. what God had made them because of their new relationship with Him.
8. It took 40 years for the children of Israel to lay down their slave-mentality and the habits they had learned in Egypt, and become what they in fact were – the Army of the Lord.
 - a. then they went in and took possession of what God had

intended them to have from the start.

- b. of the entire generation of adults who come out of Egypt, only 2; 2 out of some 3 million, seem to have understood what the Passover and the Exodus accomplished!
- 9. That makes me wonder if the ratio is about the same for Christians.
- 10. How many truly grasp what it means to *be saved*?
 - a. how many lay hold of the reality of who they are in Christ?
 - b. how many live the truth of 2 Cor. 5:17?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- c. we read that and say “Great!” but how many *live it*?
- d. Paul is saying here, to use the words of my favorite band – there’s a new way to be human.
- e. life in Jesus is something radically different from the life we lived in the world.
- f. and when people live that life, really live it, walking in who they are in Christ, it turns this world upside down!
- 11. This was Paul’s passion, that Christians would enter in to the fullness of their new identity in Christ; that they would lay aside the old habits of thinking and behavior that marked their lives before being born again, and that they would live in the spiritual power and abundance Jesus came to give us.
- 12. Listen to his words in Ephesians 1:15-19

15 [When] I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

[6]

III. CONLCUSION

A. *My Eyes Opened*

1. The 14 verses prior to this are literally jam-packed with awesome truths about who we are in Christ. It's my very most favorite passage in the entire Bible and one I've made the object of the closest study.
2. You see, I long for *my* eyes to be opened to who I really am in Christ.
 - a. I don't want to live like a slave!
 - b. I don't want to come short in laying hold of all of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me.
 - c. I want to forget those things which are behind, and press forward into all of that which Christ has died to make possible.
 - d. I want to attain my potential in Christ.
 - e. I can think of no greater gift to give to God – than to become what He intended from Creation for me to be.

B. *Your Eyes Opened*

1. But there's more – I not only want this for myself, as a pastor, I long for this for each of you!
 - a. with Paul, I pray that the eyes of *your* understanding might be opened,
 - b. and that you would come to know who you are in Christ.
 - c. that you would lay down the shackles of your former bondage to sin,
 - d. that you would walk in freedom,
 - e. that the rumbling sound of the chariot wheels of hell as the world tries to ensnare and enslave you once again would not create weakness or fear, but would cause a warrior-spirit to rise up in you,
 - d. that you would put on the armor of God, wrap you hand 'round the sword of the Spirit and be done, once and for all with the things of your past.
2. We're not victims, we're *victors* because Christ has made us so!
3. Let's stop complaining and start praising.
 - a. whining and complaining are what slaves do.
 - b. winners rejoice - and we ARE winners in Christ!

4. Christian – Be Who You Are!

A precious son or daughter of the King of the Universe
A victorious warrior
A saint, a holy one of the Most High
A worshipper of the Almighty
The lover & Beloved of Jesus Christ

[1] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

[2] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

[3] Eccl. 3:8

[4] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

[5] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

[6] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville