

Remembering Redemption

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[0 : 00] The game is called, How Good Is Your Memory? Sorry. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to call out some random dates, and you're going to forget that you're grown-ups, and you're going to shout out the special day in the calendar that that is, okay?

So 26th of January. Good, nice, easy one. 14th of July. Tre Bien, Bastille Day, well done. The last Saturday in September. Footy. Footy, grand final day, well done. The second Sunday in May. Mother's Day.

Today, well done. 18th of March. That's my birthday. That hurts, you guys.

Really, right there, that hurts. Last one. 11th of November. Yeah, Armistice Day. Remembrance Day. I wonder how good your memory was.

[1 : 08] On one hand, remembering is as simple as bringing to mind names and faces, phone numbers, special dates like this game. But on the other hand, remembering has a deeper element too.

We remember that the second Sunday of May is Mother's Day, but we take mums out to lunch to commemorate all they do for us in the year.

We remember on the 11th of March. We remember on the 11th of May. We remember on the 11th of May. We remember on the 11th of May. Fallen soldiers. But we commemorate what they did for us. Dawn services, marches.

We even say lest we forget. And of course, we commemorate them with a minute silence on the day. We bring to mind their sacrifice. Remembrance is a huge part of our passage today.

It's the final plague in Egypt and Passover. And you can tell it's an epic story because alongside every verse about judgment and salvation, there's also a verse about remembrance.

[2 : 14] God wants his people never to forget what happened that night. And so how good is your memory? Do you remember what happens in this story even before I've started?

Are you the clever boy or girl from Sunday school who knows their memory verse before the teacher asks? I don't know about you. My memory is getting pretty terrible.

But that is the issue that we're going to wrestle with in this story today. And so the inside of your bulletin has the outline. And you can tell it's a longer reading because it's A4 double-sided.

We'll be flicking backwards and forwards around. So you'll need those. Keep them handy, please. Cool.

As we start, we need to realize this thing. The final plague is different from all the others. After nine plagues last week, Pharaoh still didn't let his people go.

[3 : 14] But this time, 11 verse 1, I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here. And when he does, he will drive you out completely.

This tenth plague will do the trick. It is different. With other plagues, God said they would happen. And immediately they do. But today, God announces the plague in verse 1 to 11.

But it doesn't happen until way over in your handouts, way over on 1229. You see, if you look at chapter 12, verse 29, it follows on directly after 11, verse 10.

But for some reason, in the middle, there are all these instructions about lambs and blood. With all the other plagues, Israel could sit back and watch them happen.

But with this plague, there are instructions. There's something they must do. You see, this final plague, it stands apart from all the others. The previous nine, I tried memorizing this week, blood, frogs, flies, gnats, pestilence, locusts, darkness, and the hail.

[4 : 35] That's nine. But with this one, it is the worst. Look at 11, verse 4, sorry, 11, 4. This is what the Lord says. About midnight, I will go through Egypt.

Every firstborn son in Egypt will die. From the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill. And all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt, worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. And when it happens in 1229, it is terrifying stuff.

In 11, verse 4, God promises the firstborn sons will die at midnight. And in 12, verse 29, that's exactly what happens. In 11, verse 6, God promises a night of devastation.

And in 12, verse 30, it says, There was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. God promises that this plague will do the trick.

[5 : 39] And in 12, verse 31, Pharaoh waves the white flag. 12, verse 31, up, leave my people, you and the Israelites, go. Worship the Lord as you've requested.

Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. My eldest is a firstborn son. And so passages like this are quite scary stuff.

I wonder, are there any firstborn sons in the room today? I'm a number two son. So all my life was hand-me-down clothes. I never got to sit in the front seat of the car on the way to school.

I'm never going to inherit the Henderson billions. But after reading this passage, that is so much better than being my older brother, isn't it?

The tenth plague is exceptionally strong. But notice that the punishment fits the crime. Do you remember back in chapter 1? It was Pharaoh who killed the firstborn sons of Israel.

[6 : 40] Remember the babies? He threw them in the Nile. Now, Yahweh is revisiting that on him. The Israelites in chapter 1, they cried out from their concentration camp.

Now, it is the Egyptians who are wailing. When it comes to God's judgment, the punishment fits the crime. In nine other plagues, Israel was spared.

But this time, the distinction isn't automatic. God warns that no one is safe from this plague. 11 verse 5, it talks about the firstborn of Pharaoh all the way to the firstborn of the female slave who is at her hand mill.

No one is safe. And we are happy when it's Pharaoh who gets it. We're happy when he gets his comeuppance. But when it's God judging his own people, that is harder.

We struggle when seemingly good and innocent people face his anger as well. And that is because we divide the world between good and bad, between slave and oppressor.

[7 : 47] Pharaoh, he's clearly the bad, isn't he? He's clearly the oppressor. He's like a pantomime villain. We boo hiss every time he enters the story. The Israelites, they're the goodies.

Why are they being judged? But the Bible doesn't have a pantomime view of the world. We read Exodus with rose-colored glasses when we look at Israel.

But later in their history, as I'm sure lots of you remember, they grumble against God in the wilderness. They worship a golden calf.

And they will harden their hearts again and again, just like Pharaoh did in the Exodus story. The thing that differentiates between people isn't whether they're good or bad, slave or oppressor.

It's whether they are spared God's judgment when it arrives. And so on this night, for the first time ever, Israel have to do something. Strangely, strangely, their only hope lies in these instructions about lambs and blood.

[8 : 54] So have a look at chapter 12, the verses which Graham read so well for us. Chapter 12, verse 1 to 28 are instructions about lambs and blood.

And they go a bit like this. I'll paraphrase. So you select a lamb, a spotless lamb without defect. You take it into your house on the 10th day of the month. The kids are really happy.

They're trying to cuddle the sheep and they give it a name like Sean. Sean, that's really inconvenient for dad because that's going to make it harder for dad to kill Sean. On the 14th day, a few days later, poor old Sean, he cops it at midnight.

And then the family eat him for dinner with rosemary and bitter herbs and things like that. But then something really strange. Because then you're supposed to take the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts and the lintel, all over the doorposts.

Look at 12, verse 12. On that same night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals.

[9 : 59] And I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be assigned for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. It is good news if you obeyed God's instructions. Bad news for poor old Sean the sheep.

You can imagine Israelite boys that night thinking, hang about, I'm a firstborn son. When they hear those instructions. You can imagine them how many times they said, dad, dad, have you sorted out the blood on the doorposts?

And you can picture dad, can't you? Not just a little brush stroke here and there, but completely covering the whole outside of the house.

Imagine how crazy it would be if dad said to his son, yeah, yeah, I'll get to it after I do the dishes.

Oh, can I just sit down? Dad needs a rest.

[10:57] Hard day in the field. Oh, I just want to watch the latest episode of The Crown on Netflix.

Imagine how crazy it would be if you look over at your neighbor's house and you see a completely clean doorway.

Hey, mate, what are you doing? It's almost midnight. You crazy? Imagine if someone said, it's okay, I'm an Israelite. I'm not an Egyptian. I don't need the blood. God knows where I live.

I'll be fine. It's so foolish because God spoke ahead of time. There was only one way to be spared the destroyer when he came.

A lamb dies. A family is spared. It's very simple, isn't it? It's called penal substitution. Penal, so someone takes or someone faces God's penalty.

Substitute, another one has to take our place. It's very simple stuff. You see, ever since Genesis and the Garden of Eden, there's been a principle at work in the world.

[12:01] It's this. The wages of sin is death. It is a fundamental principle in the world. It started when Adam took the fruit that he wasn't supposed to. God said, on the day you eat it, you will surely die.

The wages of sin is death. Death is the penalty for sinning against our creator. The punishment fits the crime. Why the blood on the door?

It shows that a death has already happened in your house. And so the judgment can pass over to the next house. And so, for us in the room, where is the blood on your behalf?

Where is it? Because as hard as it is to imagine, the tenth plague points to something even worse. It's a picture of final judgment because all people have sinned against our creator.

And so all people are facing that tenth plague, the destroyer again. Passover points to the rescue we need.

[13:09] Lots of religions, they have sin offerings and sacrifices, rituals, priests, laws, traditions and good deeds. And good on them. Hebrews says, in the next slide, Hebrews says, Even for Israel, the Passover lamb only sort of worked for one night, didn't it?

Because when they traveled through the wilderness, they kept facing God's judgment again and again and again. Because they could not stop sinning. The Passover lamb didn't work forever.

They need a lasting sacrifice. Hebrews says this, Where is the blood?

That is the right question to ask you. God's people are not defined by Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, culture or class. But by those who can point to the cross and say, There is the blood for me.

It's good news for us. Terrible news for the lamb. And if you're relying on Jesus, this is really important.

[14:49] If you're relying on Jesus, you need to know that God cannot judge you anymore. It's not that he won't judge you. It's that he can't judge you. Because a death has already occurred.

Your penalty was substituted on Jesus. A death has already occurred in your house, as it were.

Hebrews says that by Jesus' blood, we obtain eternal redemption.

And that is something that all other Passover lambs, all other religions, all other worldviews, they cannot claim for themselves. The New Testament passage, which was read for us, it was the night before Jesus died.

And I've paraphrased it a bit there. But can you see all the highlighting of Passover? He says in the last verse, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Jesus wants us to understand his death in light of the Passover. I put a table on your handouts there in your sheets. It's I left one side of the table deliberately blank.

[16:02] So you can tick the box and you can see all the parallels between Passover and the night of Passover and Jesus' death at Easter.

You see, maybe you knew that already. Maybe you knew this story before I started speaking. Maybe you're the bright and clever boy or girl from Sunday school who remembers facts and figures.

But remembrance is the big takeaway from today's passage. You see, God's salvation, or sorry, salvation from God's judgment via a lamb is so important.

He wants his people to remember it. Passover was so momentous, as Graham said, that God's people need a new calendar.

Can you look at 12 verse 2? 12 verse 2, Israel need a new calendar. This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

[17:06] We in the West, I suppose in probably all over the world now, we divide history, B, C, A, D for the Jews. It's B, P, before Passover and after.

In 12 verse 17, the week after Passover, 12 verse 17, celebrate the festival of unleavened bread because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt.

Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for generations to come. Each year they were to eat unleavened bread to commemorate that night when they escaped in haste and they couldn't even wait for their bread dough to rise.

12 verse 25, when you enter the land that the Lord your God will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. Commemorate it. When your children ask, what does this ceremony mean to you? Tell them. It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians. Last page, chapter 13, the consecration of the firstborn.

[18:14] Every firstborn in Israel was to either be killed or redeemed by the blood of a lamb. And again, look at the last couple of verses.

Chapter 13, verse 14. 13, 14. Listen to the emphasis on remembering. In days to come, when your son asks you, what does this mean?

Say to him, with a mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt.

This is why I sacrifice to the Lord, the first male offspring of every womb, and redeem each of my firstborn sons. How good is your memory? Is what he's asking.

Did you notice the emphasis on teaching children? Do you see how concerned God is that children are taught this good news by their parents? How will the next generation remember unless parents tell the children the good news?

[19:20] Perhaps your children are grown up and have moved out of home. What about your grandchildren? Who is telling them? We have a number of grandparents who come to the 1030 family service.

They come along and they pick up their grandkids and bring them and the children have their Sunday school lessons so they can hear the good news for themselves. Can you think of anything more important for children to remember than that Jesus died for them?

I could not think of anything this week that I want my kids to remember more. My wife and I, we tell jokes that we don't care if our kids paint their hair blue and black and their nails black and pierce and tattoos.

We don't care about anything. We try to tell ourselves we don't care about any of that stuff. But as long as they remember that Jesus died for them. I think that's right, isn't it? Probably hard for my family to practice.

But that's right. Is there anything more important for children to know? In my house, what we do is we do Bible time with the kids after dinner and prayer. And sometimes, you know, the kids have a meltdown so dad cracks it.

[20:31] And, you know, Bible time is not possible that night. So I'm not sure how good we are at teaching them. But why wouldn't we want our children? Why wouldn't we want the next generation to remember that the lamb was sacrificed for them?

Speaking of remembrance, we're Christians, aren't we? We don't. I don't remember ever bringing a spit roast out the front here for us to do a lamb.

We don't ever put blood on the door. I'm very squealing. We definitely don't put blood on the doorposts. I don't think you do that at your house either. Back then, that blood on the doorposts. 12

verse 13.

It says, the blood is to be a sign for you. For you. And so, can you think of a sign for other people that Jesus died for you?

Can you think of anything we practice here that's a sign to others that blood was spilt for you? It's the Lord's Supper, isn't it? It's the Lord's Supper.

[21 : 34] Paul says, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord for you. If you don't understand Passover from the Old Testament, you don't really understand the Lord's Supper for you.

If you want a sign to others that God's judgment has passed over you, you take the Lord's Supper. It proclaims to others that a lamb has already died in your house.

It preaches to others where your salvation lies. Jesus says in Luke 22, This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. We talked about remembrance, didn't we, at the start. We talked about the difference between merely remembering facts and figures and commemorating the significance of them.

I did some calculations this week. If you've been a Christian for 25 years or more, which I'd say is most people in the room, I did some calculations. You've taken the Lord's Supper a thousand times.

[22 : 44] So I figured 25 years equals a thousand Lord's Suppers. You can do the math on where you fit in in that. That's a lot of Lord's Suppers, isn't it? I bet you can remember all the words of the liturgy even before we say them.

But the challenge of this passage is that we commemorate it. That is, we take it in deeply. That when we take the Lord's Supper, we never get over that Jesus died for me, for you.

So that God's judgment could pass over us the judgment that we deserved. Because the punishment fits the crime. The difference between people is not slave or oppressor, good or bad.

But whether they can point to a blood that is pure enough and say, There is the lamb that was given for me. It is good for Israel, good for you, terrifying for the lamb.

And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to stop there. And you are going to take over the preaching. And we're going to do the Lord's Supper now slightly differently from the way we normally do it.

[24 : 01] But that's okay, because we've studied the Bible a lot today. And so we're going to prepare for the Lord's Supper. I've said a lot. So let's take a moment of quiet reflection just to help us commemorate and take in deeply what we've heard.

So just a moment of quiet reflection. In Luke chapter 22, on the night before Jesus died, he said, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

The bread is a sign of his body. The cup is a sign of his blood. As we eat them, we don't just remember, we commemorate our dependence on his suffering for us.

Luke says, He took bread, he gave thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper, he took the cup saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Drink this in remembrance of me.

[25 : 20] And so can those who are assisting with communion, please come forward.