

Remembering Redemption

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[0 : 00] I wonder how good your memory was. On one hand, remembering is as simple as bringing to mind names and faces and phone numbers and special dates like that game. But remembering also has a deeper element too, doesn't it? Not merely remembering, but commemorating, bringing to mind the significance of something. So we remember that the second Sunday in May is Mother's Day, but we take mums out to lunch. We give them breakfast in bed to commemorate all they do for us in the year. We remember that the 11th of the 11th is Remembrance Day. We remember fallen soldiers, but we commemorate them. A minute's silence, marches, dawn services. We even say, lest we forget, to commemorate their sacrifice for us. And remembrance is a huge part of the 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 condemnation is also lots of words about remembering. God wants his people never to forget what happened that night in Egypt. And so how good is your memory? Do you remember this story even before I've continued speaking? Are you the clever boy or girl in Sunday school who remembers their memory verses? Pick me, pick me. I know the answer.

I don't know about you. My memory is getting worse. But that is the issue we're going to deal with in the passage today. How good is your memory? And so please keep those bits of paper with you. They'll help you. And as we start, we need to realize that the final night in Egypt, this final plague is different from all the others. After nine plagues last week, Pharaoh still did not let God's people go. But this time, 11 verse 1, I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. And after that, he will let you go from here. And when he does, he will drive you out completely.

The 10th plague does the job. The 10th plague is different. With the other plagues, God said they will happen and immediately they do. But this one, God announces the plague in verse 1 to 11, but not until chapter 12 verse 29 over the other side, not until then do they actually occur.

You see, chapter 12 verse 29 follows directly on from 11 verse 10. I don't know if you can see that in your story. And in the middle are lots of instructions about lambs and blood, lambs and blood.

[2 : 51] With all the other plagues, Israel could sit back and just watch them happen. But with this plague, there's something they must do. You see, the final plague stands apart from all the others.

The previous nine were really horrible, weren't they? I'm trying to memorize them. So here it goes. Blood, frogs, flies, gnats, boils, pestilence, hail, locusts, darkness. Yay, well done, mate.

They were really horrible stuff, weren't they? But this one is the worst. Look at 11 verse 4. This is what the Lord says. About midnight, I will go throughout 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 cattle 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 firstborn sons will die at midnight.

[3 : 59] And in 1229, that's exactly what happens. In 11 verse 6, God promises a night of devastation. And in 12 verse 30, it says, There was a loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

God promises that this plague will do the trick. And in 12 verse 31, Pharaoh waves the white flag. Up, leave my people, you and the Israelites, go.

Worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. My eldest, he's a firstborn son. And so passages like this are really shocking stuff.

Are there any firstborn sons in the room? A few, my dad is. A few here and there. I'm a number two son. And so all my life, it was hand-me-down clothes.

I never got to sit in the front seat of the car on the way to school. I'll never inherit the Henderson billions. But that is better than being my older brother, isn't it?

[5 : 09] When you read a passage like this. The 10th plague is exceptionally strong. But I want you to notice that the punishment fits the crime.

The punishment fits the crime. Remember back in chapter 1, Pharaoh killed the babies of Israel, throwing them in the Nile. But now it's the firstborn sons of Egypt that God revisits on him. Back in chapter 1, it was the Israelites who cried out from their concentration camps. But now there's a loud wailing amongst the Egyptians. When it comes to God's judgment, the punishment fits the crime.

And in nine other plagues, Israel was spared. But this time, the distinction isn't automatic. God warns this time that no one is safe. 11 verse 5, it talks about the firstborn of Pharaoh, even down to the firstborn of the female slave who is at her hand mill.

Everyone is in the firing line. And we're happy, aren't we? We're happy when Pharaoh gets it. But less so when God condemns his own people.

[6 : 16] We struggle when good and innocent people face judgment too. And that is because we divide the world between good and evil, between oppressors and victims.

Pharaoh, he's clearly an oppressor, clearly a baddie. He is like a pantomime villain, isn't he? We boo him every time he comes on the stage.

But the Israelites, they're the goodies, aren't they? They're the victims. And so why are they in the firing line? You see, the Bible doesn't have a pantomime view of the world.

We read Exodus with rose-colored glasses when we look at Israel. But pretty soon, they will grumble against God in the wilderness. They will make a golden calf.

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

[7 : 16] It's whether or not they're spared God's judgment when it comes. And so on this night, for the first time, Israel have to do something. And strangely, their only hope lies in some rules about lambs and blood.

So this is our second point. The passage which Allison read for us, 12, 1 to 28, their instructions about lambs and blood. And they go a bit like this.

I'm going to paraphrase. So you select a male lamb without defect. You take him into your house on the 10th day of the month. The kids love it. They give the lamb a name. They call him Sean because he's a sheep.

They cuddle Sean. They take him into the bed and everything. And that's going to be a real problem for Dad. Because on the 14th day, poor old Dad has to kill Sean. And that's going to be harder when you name things, isn't it?

What's more, poor old Sean will be served up for dinner, along with rosemary and other bitter herbs on the 14th night. But then things get really strange. Because you've got to take the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts and the, you know, the tops of the outside of the house, the door frames.

[8 : 31] Look at 12, verse 12. On that same night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals. And I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.

I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign 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 the instructions. Bad news if you happen to be a lamb. You can imagine Israelite boys hearing these instructions going, Hang about.

I'm a firstborn son. You can imagine them saying, Hey, Dad, have you, you know, sort of that blood out? And then you can picture Dad, can't you? Not just a brushstroke of blood, but completely drenching the outer doorway of the house.

Imagine how crazy it would be. Imagine this. If a dad said to his son, Yeah, yeah, I'll get to it, son, after dinner. I'll get to it after I do the dishes. Oh, wait, son, can I just sit down?

[9 : 38] Dad's had a hard day in the field. Can I just watch the latest episode of The Crown on Netflix? How crazy would that be? Imagine if you looked at your neighbor across the street, and you saw a totally clean doorway.

You're like, mate, what are you doing? It's almost midnight. Imagine how crazy if someone says, It's okay, it's okay. I'm an Israelite, not an Egyptian. God knows where I live.

I don't need to mark out my doorway. It's so foolish because God has spoken ahead of time. The only way to be spared is one way, through the blood, when the judgment comes.

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

Substitute, another one takes our place. Very simple stuff. Why the blood on the door? It just shows that a death has already occurred at your house.

[10:47] God's judgment can pass over to the next one. Very simple, isn't it? And so, the question for you, where is the blood on your behalf?

Where is it? Because as hard as it is to imagine, the tenth plague in Egypt actually points to something even worse. It's a picture of final judgment, when all people are facing God's wrath, because all people have sinned against our Creator.

You see, ever since Genesis, there's a fundamental principle at work in the world, and that is this. The wages of sin is death. Remember Adam, when he took the fruit of the tree, God says, On the day you eat of it, you will surely die.

The wages of sin is death. It's the penalty for sinning against our Creator. The punishment fits the crime. And so, now all people are in the firing line. And so, we're all facing that tenth plague again. Passover is the rescue that we need, or at least it points to the rescue we need. Lots of traditions, lots of religions. They have sin offerings, sacrifices, rituals, priests, laws, traditions, good deeds, and good on them.

[12:08] But Hebrews says, Can I have a slide, Paul? Hebrews says, It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

It might sort of work one time for a moment, but it's impossible for animal sacrifices to take away our sins. Where is the blood?

That is the right question. God's people are not defined by Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, slave or free, culture or class, but only by people who can point to the lamb, point to the cross, and say, There is the blood on my behalf.

It is good news for us, terrible news for Jesus. And if you're relying on Jesus, you need to know that God cannot condemn you anymore.

It's not that He won't condemn you, it's that He can't condemn you, because a lamb has already died for you. Your penalty has already been substituted on Jesus.

[13:16] A death has already occurred in your house. Hebrews says, in our next slide, Paul, Jesus did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but He entered the most holy place once for all by His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

You see, all other rituals, all other Passover lambs, they cannot achieve a lasting sacrifice. Only the blood of Jesus attains eternal redemption.

A New Testament passage, which Elaine read for us, that was from Luke's gospel, the night before Jesus died. Paul, please, on the screen. I've chopped out a couple of verses, but highlighted in orange, Passover.

Look at verse 15 there. 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, and I left one side of the table deliberately clear, so you can tick through and see all the parallels between the first, or that last night in Passover, and what happens at Jesus' death.

[14:37] I'll leave that to you for your homework. You see, I wonder if maybe you knew all this already. Maybe you remembered the story before we begin. Maybe you remember all this teaching about lambs and blood.

Maybe you're the bright and clever boy or girl from Sunday school who knows the facts and figures, but remembrance is the big takeaway in the passage today.

See, salvation from God's judgment through the sacrifice of another blood is something He never wants His people to forget.

In 12 verse 2, He wants them to mark it with a new calendar. He says, this month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

We here, we divide history, B, C, A, D, but for the Jews, it's B, P, before Passover and after. In 12 verse 17, they're to celebrate the festival of unleavened bread, because it was on that very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt.

[15:43] Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Each year, they had to eat unleavened bread for seven days to commemorate that they fled from Egypt in haste.

They didn't even have time to let the dough rise. Look at 12 verse 25. When you enter the land that the Lord your God will give you, as He promised, observe this ceremony.

And when your children ask you, 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.

The final date in chapter 13 is the consecration of the firstborn. The idea there is, forever, Israel will either kill or redeem their firstborn children through the blood of a lamb.

Just the last verse, just for the final time, 13 verse 14. 13, 14. Listen to the emphasis on remembering. In days to come, when your son asks you, what does this mean?

[16:47] Say to him, with a mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh suddenly 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. Did you notice the emphasis on remembering?

Did you notice God's emphasis on teaching children? God is particularly concerned with the Christian education of children. How will the next generations remember if parents don't teach children the good news?

Perhaps your children are grown-ups. Maybe they've moved out of the house. Maybe you've got grandkids now. Who is telling them? Who is telling your children?

You know, we've got a number of grandparents here at the 1030 service who make a point of picking up their grandkids and bringing them to church so that someone can tell them that Jesus died for them.

[17:52] Fantastic, isn't it? Can you think of a more important thing for children to remember than Jesus dying for them? Rachel and I, we have this funny thing where we say, you know, we don't care if our kids are covered in tattoos and piercings and, you know, all the stuff that I get nervous about when I walk down the streets.

You know, we don't care if they do any of that stuff as long as they know that Jesus loves them and that he died for them. And I think, I hope that, you know, we hold to that, that it's Jesus' death for them above all other things.

Can you think of a more important thing for your kids and your grandkids to know? In my house, we do Bible time and prayer with the kids after dinner and then a quick prayer before bed and some days the kids are playing up and say, dad cracks it and Bible time is probably not possible that night.

I'm not sure how good we are at teaching our kids but why wouldn't we want to give the next generation the good news Jesus died for them and that God's condemnation can pass over them. Can you think of any, why wouldn't you want to do that? Speaking of remembrance, we don't celebrate the Passover here, do we? I don't remember ever, we've done a few sausage sizzles but I don't remember a lamb on a spit out the back and I certainly have never seen blood on the doorposts at this church.

[19:20] I'm not sure you've got blood on your doorposts once a year at home. Back then, the blood on the doorposts, it says in 12:13, it was a sign to others, sign to others and so, can you think of a sign to other people that Jesus died for you?

I wonder if you know what do we do here that's a sign to other people that blood has been spilt for you? Anyone know? Lord's Supper.

Thanks, Don. Paul says, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. If you don't understand Passover, you cannot fully understand the Lord's Supper.

Do you see that? Jesus wants us to understand his body and blood, his last supper, in light of that last night in Egypt. If you don't fully understand Passover, you don't fully understand Jesus' death for you.

The old and the new is so elegant in the way that it works like that. If you want a sign to others that God's judgment has passed over from you, you take the Lord's Supper.

[20 : 40] It proclaims that a lamb has already been sacrificed for you. It preaches to others where your salvation lies.

Jesus says in Luke 22 on his last night, he says, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And we talked about remembrance at the start, didn't we? We talked about the difference between merely bringing to mind facts and figures and commemorating something, bringing to mind its significance.

And if you've been a Christian, I did some calculations this week. If you've been a Christian for 25 years or more, through my rough calculations, you've celebrated the Lord's Supper a thousand times.

That's pretty good. I'll leave you to do your own calculations for how that applies to you in your life. 25 years of Christianity, regular church going, is a thousand Lord's Suppers. That's a lot.

[21 : 38] I bet you remember the words of the Lord's Supper that we do even once a month here. I bet you can recall all the facts and figures of this story.

But the challenge of this passage is that we commemorate the Lamb that died for us deep inside. That we never get over what Jesus did for me and for you.

He took the judgment that we deserve because the punishment fits the crime, doesn't it? The difference between people is not slave or oppressor, good and bad.

It's whether they can point to the blood and say, there is the blood for me, blood of a different quality than everything else.

And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to stop talking and you're going to take over the preaching now and we're going to share the Lord's Supper. We're going to preach it to one another.

[22 : 38] We're going to do it slightly differently this month. I've said a lot of things so we're going to have a moment of quiet reflection and then I'll continue. The issue for Israel, show me the blood that was given for you.

In Luke 22, on the night before Jesus died, he said, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer and shed my blood. The bread is a sign of his body.

The cup is a sign of his blood. And as we eat them, we commemorate. We take hold of what Jesus did for us, even if it's for the thousandth time or more.

Luke says, he took bread, he gave thanks and 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.

[23 : 48] And so could those who are assisting with Lord's Supper, please come forward. Amen.