

The Passover

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[0 : 0 0] It would be great if you could open your Bibles to Exodus chapter 11, which Ruth read for us so well. There's also an outline in the bulletin that you may find helpful.

Now, I'm not sure if you've ever had any defining moments in your life that have shaped the way you live. For me, one of the defining moments was when we had children.

I never thought that I'd ever have to brush someone else's teeth. I never thought I'd ever have to play Barbies or read Angelina Ballerina.

I never thought I'd have to actually help someone else at the toilet. Kids change the way you live. It was a defining moment for us. Now, don't get me wrong, we're very thankful for our children, particularly in light of our friends who can't have any.

But their births were such a defining moment, so significant, that we remember them every year. Their birthday, well, we usually do.

[1 : 0 5] We actually forgot our youngest one's birthday a little while ago, but only for half a day then we remembered. We remembered. She's three, she won't remember.

Of course, there are defining moments as well for nations, aren't there? Anzac Day has become a day when we remember, not just Gallipoli, but all of Australia's involvement in World War I.

And for Australia, our involvement in that war was a defining moment in our history. In fact, the historians say it has shaped our identity. We have become known as a nation of mateship and hard work and bravery.

And its significance for us as a nation is seen by the way that we celebrate and remember it year after year on Anzac Day. Well, as we come to the Bible today, we see another defining moment for another nation, the nation of Israel.

And this defining moment shaped their identity in order to have shaped the way they lived ever after. What is this moment? Well, it's the moment of the exodus or the exit out of Egypt when God redeems his people from slavery there.

[2 : 1 3] By the way, the word redemption just means a buying back. God was going to buy back his people from slavery. And this was such a significant moment for Israel that they were to remember it year after year after year.

So let's pick it up at chapter 11. Last week, as we heard from Annette, we looked at the first nine plagues. This week, we see the tenth and final plague predicted. Point one, verse one.

The Lord said to Moses, I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterwards, he will let you go from here. Indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away.

Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbour and every woman is to ask her neighbour for objects of silver and gold. The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, Moses himself was a man of great importance in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's officials and in the sight of the people.

And so Moses said to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, about midnight I will go out through Egypt. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die. Now Moses announces to Pharaoh this last plague, this final plague of the death of the firstborn.

[3 : 32] Now at first glance, I wasn't exactly sure what was going on because at the end of chapter 10, Pharaoh said to Moses, if I see your face again, you're dead, buddy.

I'm going to kill you. And yet here he is again announcing another plague to Pharaoh and Pharaoh is not trying to kill him. So what's going on here? Well, the key is to remember that this conversation in chapter 11 is actually just continuing on from chapter 10.

Now follow along with me and I'll show you as we go. So pick it up back at chapter 10, verse 28. Then Pharaoh said to him, get away from me. Take care that you do not see my face again. For on that day you see my face, you shall die.

Moses says, well, just as you say, I will never see your face again. And in the first three verses of chapter 11 are like a little aside by the narrator. Verse 1 should really say the Lord had said to Moses to indicate that he's recalling something that Lord God had said to Moses earlier on.

And then so Moses continues the conversation in verse 4. Moses said to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord. And then it's not until verse 8 that Moses actually leaves Pharaoh and that conversation hot in anger.

[4 : 42] So that's the structure of the passage. It's the conversation is being continued from last week. But the plague we're looking at this week is the plague of the firstborn.

And it's the last one. Do you notice the phrase again in verse 1 of chapter 11? God says, one more plague. It's as though this is it, the plague that will set Israel free.

The last one. In fact, this is the plague God had been planning all along. It's one of the reasons that God had been hardening Pharaoh's heart so that this plague would be performed.

Just keep your hands in chapter 11 for a moment. Just flick back to chapter 4 and you'll see what I mean there. Chapter 4, page 45. Chapter 4, verse 21 to 23.

Just top of the right hand side there. Second paragraph. And the Lord said to Moses, When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power.

[5 : 42] But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, Let my son go that he may worship me.

But you refuse to let him go. Now I will kill your firstborn son. You see, from the start, God had been planning this particular plague.

It's not as though God was up there in heaven. He sent the fly and the frogs and Pharaoh's resisted. And, oh wow, I'm going to have to up the ante and do something else now. What else have I got in my bag of tricks?

No, God had been planning this all along. I do note, as we discussed last week, it's not just God hardening Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh is happy to harden his own heart as well.

And we see that in the Bible text. Both are true. And so God will send this final plague, this final judgment. But what's so special about this one that he'd been leading up to it the whole time?

[6 : 41] Well, two things. First, the plague is different because there seems to be more of a direct correspondence between what Pharaoh has done and what God will do.

You see, Israel was God's firstborn son. We saw that in chapter 4. They were extraordinarily precious to God. But Egypt took all of Israel.

Egypt had taken God's firstborn son. And so now God will take all of Egypt's firstborn sons, you see. It is a full-on judgment, but it is just.

But secondly, it teaches Israel that their redemption costs. At the cost is death. Come back with me to chapter 11, verse 1, if you're not back there already.

Here, notice that their release, their redemption will come after this plague. See verse 1? One more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt.

[7 : 37] And afterwards, he will let you go from here. In other words, Israel's redemption will come through this judgment, which here in this tenth plague is actually death.

Death of the Egyptian firstborn. Redemption, you see, comes through judgment. In fact, God has already said back in chapter 6, I will redeem you, Israel, with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

Their redemption will come through judgment, which here is the death of another person. Their redemption will come through the death of another person. Is that starting to ring any New Testament bells for you?

Of course, Jesus didn't deserve judgment like the Egyptians did. But the point here, God is teaching them that redemption costs.

But redemption also reverses the situation. Have a look back at chapter 11, verse 2. Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbour and every woman is to ask her neighbour for objects of silver and gold.

[8 : 40] And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Now, again, I read this and I thought, this sounds a little odd. You know, God is working in the hearts of the Egyptians so that the Israelites can loot them.

Now, I was thinking, I wonder if that'll work. If I pray that God will work in the heart of my neighbour, who's got a really nice car, it's not what's going on here, is it? It's not legalised looting.

For starters, the Israelites don't take, they ask. And the Egyptians give. And in so doing, we see a great reversal that redemption brings.

You see, before the Egyptians took from Israel and plundered their lives, they made them slaves, oppressed them, worked them ruthlessly, and I'm guessing possibly took their possessions as well.

But instead of taking now, the Egyptians will give and allow Israel to plunder them. It's a complete reversal, you see. And the Israelites were once oppressed and poor, well, they will walk out of Egypt free and rich.

[9 : 46] See, when God redeems, he reverses the situation. Of course, when he redeems us in the New Testament age, now, he doesn't promise us earthly riches, but he promises us spiritual riches.

Ephesians 1 says that if you trust in Jesus, you will be given every spiritual blessing in Christ. If you've been given every one, what do you lack?

Nothing. It's terrific. When God redeems us, he reverses our situation from slavery to sin to spiritual blessing. But the point here is that redemption reverses the situation.

And we see it again in verses 6 to 8. See if you can spot some reversals here in verses 6 to 8. Earlier, Israel cried out, but verse 6, Then there will be a loud cry through the whole land of Egypt.

Such has never been or will ever be again. But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites, not at people, not at animals, so that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

[10 : 49] Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me and bow low to me, saying, Leave us, you and all the people who follow you. After that, I will leave.

And in hot in anger, Moses left Pharaoh. How did you go? Did you see a couple of reversals there? Back in chapter 2, verse 23, it was Israel who cried out under the yoke of slavery.

But now who's going to cry out? Egypt, aren't they? In fact, there won't even be a sound in Israel. Not a sound. As God saves his people.

The other reversal is in verse 8, where the officials that once would have bowed low before Pharaoh, who were they going to bow low before now? Moses. You see, they will recognise that it is Moses' God who is the true God.

There's a reversal, you see. Well, after another little aside by the narrator in verses 9 and 10, we come to the Passover prescribed point 2. We're going to move a little bit faster now. You'll be glad to know.

[11 : 49] Point 2, chapter 12, verse 1. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, This month shall mark for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.

Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in attaining one.

The lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat it, he says. Here we begin to see the significance of the Passover. The month that it occurs in is now going to be the first month of the year.

Just like that. You know, if we had a Passover, if we were back then and it happened in July, that's it. It's going to start going July, or what's next? August and so on and so on from the beginning of the year. Complete reversal, isn't it?

In other words, these events are to shape their year ahead. But more than that, the way these instructions are given shows that God expects them to do it year after year, down through the generations. And so it's as though this event is so significant that it will not only shape this year, but it will shape every year for the nation of Israel.

[12 : 59] It will shape their whole lives, in fact. And at the centre of these events is an unblemished lamb and his blood. See verse 5? Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year old male.

You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the 14th day of this month. Then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.

They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat. The lamb, it says, is to be perfect, unblemished.

Why? Because it has a special role to play. Or rather, its blood has a special role to play. But before God explains that role, he prescribes or tells them how to eat this lamb.

Verse 8, They shall eat the lamb that same night. They shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roast it over the fire with its head, legs, and inner organs.

[14 : 01] You shall let none of it remain until the morning. Anything that remains until the morning, you shall burn. Notice how the lamb is to be completely consumed.

It's either to be eaten or any leftovers burned. Why? Well, again, because there is something special about this lamb. In our house, we sometimes have trouble getting our kids to finish their dinner.

Usually it's when I cook, but let's just call that a coincidence, shall we? But the one time we never have any trouble getting our kids to finish their meal is when it's their birthday and they've chosen what to eat.

They completely consume that because it's special. They like it. Well, here, the Israelites are to completely consume this lamb because it is special. Not because it tastes especially good.

I mean, after all, it comes along with bitter herbs, doesn't it? No, it's special because of what this lamb's blood will do. Have a look at verse 11 to 13. It says, This is how you shall eat it.

[15 : 01] Your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals.

On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. And the blood? Well, that shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live. When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

You see, the lamb's blood will protect them from the plague. That's its role. It will save them, and in particular, it will save their firstborn who are under threat. For the lamb and its blood will act like a substitute for the firstborn of Israel.

The lamb will die in their place, so to speak. And so again, God is teaching them that redemption costs. Their life comes at the expense of another's death.

In fact, verse 13 says, the blood will be a sign for you, Israelites. He's teaching them, you see, to show you, Israelites, that redemption costs. And so Israel is not only redeemed by God's judgment on the Egyptian firstborn, they are also redeemed by the blood of the lamb which dies in their place.

[16 : 20] Now those New Testament bills should really start to be ringing hard now, shouldn't they? What's more, this lamb's blood is even smeared on wooden doorposts which quite possibly could be an allusion to the wooden cross.

Either way, the means by which God redeems Israel is twofold. He redeems them by judgment and by a substitute, both of which involve death. But of course, if this substitute is to be effective for them, the Israelites must trust God.

And they must trust him enough to obey, which this time they actually do. In verses 15 to 20, God speaks about the feast of the unleavened bread and that follows the Passover for seven days.

And in verses 21 to 27, Moses kind of passes on the instructions to the Israelites that God gave him. And then over the page, have a look at verse 28. The Israelites went and did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

You see, they trust God enough to obey. And if they didn't trust God and didn't obey, then they wouldn't have been saved, would they? They wouldn't have put the blood on the doorposts and they wouldn't have been saved.

[17 : 30] You see, to be saved involves genuine trust or faith. And it's the same for us. If we want to be saved from sins, if we want to know for certain we are going to heaven, then we need to trust in Jesus.

That's all. Genuinely trust in him and we will be saved. We come now to the plague performed, point three. I hope you've appreciated how hard I've worked with the alliteration of the letter P.

That was a joke. And in verse 29 we read, At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who sat in the dungeon and all the firstborn of the livestock.

Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his officials and all the Egyptians that there was a loud cry in Egypt for there was not a house without someone dead. Then he summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, well presumably he sent his officials to Moses and Aaron who bowed low to Moses and who summoned Moses back.

And when Moses came back he said, rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites. Go worship the Lord as you said. Take your flocks and your herds as you said and be gone and bring a blessing on me too.

[18 : 47] And the Egyptians urged the people to hasten their departure from the land for they said, we shall all be dead. So the people took their dough before it was leavened with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their cloaks on their shoulders.

The Israelites had done as Moses told them. They had asked the Egyptians for jewellery of silver and gold and for clothing and the Lord had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians so that they let them have whatever they asked for and so they plundered the Egyptians.

Notice here that everything proceeds just as God had said it would which again shows that God is in control and not Pharaoh, not the Egyptian gods, not even the Egyptian sun god Ra who was supposed to be in control of life and the sun and so on.

Even he couldn't stand against the true God and so the Israelites leave Egypt in verse 37 where they had been for 430 years but notice verse 42 towards the bottom of the page.

Verse 42 that was for the Lord a night of watching or vigil to bring them out of the land of Egypt and that same night is a vigil to be kept for the Lord by all the Israelites throughout the generations.

[19 : 57] See just as God kept watch over them this night and redeemed them from Egypt so too the Israelites year after year are to keep watch that same night for the Lord it says.

In other words remembering the Lord who redeemed them. It's all about remembering their redemption you see which brings us to our final point point 4. This Passover is to be a perpetual Passover.

In other words it's to be done over and over again so that they might remember this day and live in light of it. He says the same thing back in chapter 12 verse 14 he says this day shall be a day of remembrance for you.

You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance. Or down in chapter 12 verse 24 you shall observe this right as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children when you come to the land that the Lord has given you as he promised you shall keep this observance and when your children ask you what do you mean by this observance you shall say it is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he struck down the Egyptian but spared our houses and the people bowed down and worshipped.

You see they are to keep on doing this Passover year after year so that they might remember their redemption that they might remember the God who redeemed them that they might remember the cost of their redemption in fact that's what basically the rest most of chapter 13 is about remembering these things except chapter 13 adds one other little difference it reminds them that because God has redeemed them they belong to him and we see that in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 13 see the verse before chapter 12 verse 50 all the Israelites did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron and that very day the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt company by company he redeemed them and then the Lord said to Moses consecrate to me all the firstborn whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites of human beings and animals is mine you see because God had bought Israel because he had redeemed them they were his and so they were to give back to God to consecrate to God their firstborn to symbolise that they all as God's nation of firstborn sons belong to him you see the exodus is the defining moment in Israel's history and they were never to forget it but rather they were to live in light of it of course there is another defining moment which is the defining moment of world history the moment

[22 : 45] Jesus died on the cross in fact the whole event in these chapters points us to this in lots of ways and I've tried to show you a few as we've gone along for example it's Jesus who takes our judgment so that we can go free it's Jesus who is our Passover lamb as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5 and it's by Jesus' blood that we are ransomed as we heard in our first reading redeemed and so significant is this event that we are to remember it not just every year not just when we have communion at church but every day of our lives why because we forget just this week I was speaking with Andrew number one is that what we call you boss wise one sir anyway I had a couple of questions about this passage Andrew's written a commentary on Exodus and I've actually done a master's subject on Exodus but we'd both forgotten what we've read couldn't remember a thing you see we forget things don't we that's not just us by the way we all forget things or we get so busy that

Jesus kind of gets crowded out you know an afterthought we need to be reminded we need to work hard at remembering our redemption remembering the God who saved us and what it cost him to do that so that we might be motivated to praise him with our mouths and serve him with our hands and hearts I was reading through the book of Acts a little while ago and I came across this verse which is actually on your outlines it's from Acts chapter 20 Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders and he says be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood and that really struck me it struck me because it's a great little verse that says Jesus is God because it says God bought with his own blood but it also is a great verse because it reminds us of our redemption God has bought us you see and what is the cost it's his blood the blood of Jesus now that means we are extraordinarily precious to him that God would pay that much for us you are extraordinarily precious to

God did you know that I don't cry a lot I don't weep in romantic movies in fact when Michelle watches one I just kind of think that's nice and I'll walk out the room but as I was reflecting on how precious I am to God that he would bleed for me I must confess that my eyes welled up a little you see it ought to give us goosebumps from time to time we are extraordinarily precious to Jesus that he would bleed for us and when we realize that when we remember how precious we are when we remember the cost that Christ paid for our redemption that that ought to motivate us to live not for ourselves but for him who died for us I used to know a guy who went to university to do PE teaching but soon discovered that the culture of the PE teaching at this university was one of getting drunk binge drinking and he found that peer pressure there really hard to resist really hard to resist for him and so he changed courses he changed to something else that

I think was third or fourth preference now he could have changed universities sure but I think that was going to be even harder for him but the point is here is a guy who knew he was God's here is a guy who knew what it cost God to save him and forgive him and so he was determined to serve God with his body with his life now of course I'm not suggesting that alcohol is your problem but you get the idea don't you see we had to remember our redemption and what it costs God and therefore how precious we are to him so that we too might be just as determined to serve him who redeemed us in the words of our next hymn we're to remember that love so amazing so divine that it demands my soul my life my all let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for the lord Jesus thank you so much that he died as our substitute that his blood can bring us forgiveness for ignoring you in our lives and going our own way all we have to do is ask for it and trust father we pray that you would help us to remember the cost of our redemption that we might be motivated to serve not ourselves but you who gave your son for us let me ask it in his name