

# Exodus 11:4-7 & 12:3-13

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[ 0 : 00 ] But before we delve in, I want you to have a think about a question, if you will, about this question. Why do we look down on people? Why do we look down on people?

And it's something we all do. I think we just need to look at the recent election and the utter disdain people showed for people of different views, whether it was conservative versus Labour, but also in other areas we often look down on one another, whether it's secular versus religious, rich versus poor.

And we do all do it. Have a think about yourself. Have you written perhaps an offensive comment about someone or gossiped about someone recently? Or think of it like this.

Who would you not bother listening to if they came and knocked on your door? We do all do it. So why do we do it? Why do we look down on people?

Well, I think the answer is it's because they lack something that we have. And we assume we've got it because we're superior in some way.

[ 1 : 09 ] I understand this. They don't. I look like this. They don't. I live like this. They don't. There's a character in the American Office TV show.

I don't know if you've seen it. The character is called Dwight Schrute. And he just believes he is superior in every way to everyone else. He just believes ridiculous things about himself.

For example, he said, Through concentration, I can raise and lower my cholesterol at will. He just believes ridiculous things about himself. But because he does, he looks down on people.

He thinks he's superior to others. But more seriously, what's going on in that moment as we look down on others? Well, we're trying to justify our own way of doing things, aren't we?

Make us feel better about it. The issue we pick on, perhaps, whether it's what people look like, what they believe in, what they stand for, most likely reflects choices and issues that we've invested time and meaning and purpose into.

[ 2 : 19 ] So the moment we look down on someone, it actually reveals far more about ourselves than it does the person we're talking to. It reveals superiority in our own hearts.

But it reveals what our identity is based on. What's important to us. And that identity has massive consequences for us and how we live.

Now, our passage of scripture was taken from the book of Exodus, where the two groups of people in it have every reason to look down on one another. It's the Egyptians and the Israelites.

There are two camps. It's about 1500 BC. The Israelites moved there after a famine. And after a few hundred years, they are a massive nation. Far more than 600,000 people.

But Egypt, like any good superpower, have enslaved them. They've done their job. They've treated them as inferior. They've made them build their great buildings.

[ 3 : 21 ] And Pharaoh sets himself up against God. And through a guy called Moses, God has demanded that Pharaoh let his people go.

But Pharaoh refuses. And so God sent plagues. A bit like righteous sanctions on a rogue nation. But Pharaoh has refused.

And God now threatens. That we read about them with the ultimate plague. If you don't notice that in verse 5 of chapter 11. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.

God calls his people his firstborn. And so threatens Egypt with the loss of their firstborn. Now this isn't some overly tetchy little God.

No, this is the right and just response on those who have set themselves up against God. And there's an intriguing and important comment from God in verse 7.

[ 4 : 20 ] I don't know if you noticed it. Just at the end it says, So in this final play God is going to show us a distinction between the two.

In other words, what's at the heart of their identities? What's the big issue that divides them? So what is that based on? Is it just nationality? Well there's different ways of answering this. But let's take it from the view of the Israelite. Okay, let's see how this final plague works out for him. I want you to imagine the day of an ordinary Israelite.

Think back those three and a half thousand years. And try and imagine it. We'll be using what's being read to us in Exodus 12. So it's been a tough day's work for this Israelite. In heat hotter than it was last week.

I know we Brits struggle to imagine heat hotter than it was last week. But it does actually get hotter than that. And he's been making brick after brick after brick after brick.

[ 5 : 24 ] He comes home tired. He's weary. But he's excited. He knows today is the day. He gets home. He greets his wife with a kiss.

He perhaps ruffles the hair of his son who completely ignores him because he's staring at whatever the ancient equivalent of TV is. And he goes out.

And he finds the chosen lamb. The little sheep. And it's perfect. There's not a defect. There's not a problem. Now this is a big moment that's about to happen.

And he manages to get his family in from outside or whatever they're doing to come and watch.

They need to see this. This isn't just in a morbid way. But as we'll see it's because it's a life-giving moment.

He's had all the instructions from Moses that we've just read. And so it's twilight. The sun's just set. He takes the lamb. He kills it with his knife.

[ 6 : 22 ] He drains the blood into a bucket. The meat's prepared to roast. But it's the blood they're interested in. He goes out. He takes his son by the hand.

Goes outside. Grabs a plant called a hyssop. Dips it in the bucket. And starts painting it on the doorposts and the lintel.

Perhaps blood drips down a bit leaving marks in the dirt. And having painted those doorposts, he takes a bit of a step back. And in the early evening light, you know that orange light, he starts to look down the houses, row after row, house after house after house, and sees red marks on them, on each going down.

A few houses down, he sees one doesn't have any. Fourth on the left, there's another one that doesn't have any blood on it. It's the Egyptian's house. But there on his house, on his door is the blood.

So they go inside, eat their roast lamb, pack their stuff ready to leave Egypt, and then go to sleep, waiting for morning. What will be the result?

[ 7 : 33 ] Now, why had God required the death of a lamb? Why is a lamb needed to die instead of their son?

What does this show us about people? Well, it shows us the Israelite is no better than the Egyptian. It shows the Israelite deserves death just as much as the Egyptian does.

Without the lamb, he would die just the same. Before God, they are both guilty. Both facing God's judgment. And the thing is, we know, deep down, that this is true of us too.

What unites us is actually our guilt before God. I know that in my heart, without another's death, I would not be able to stand before God.

Just this week, I have been self-centered. I've got angry with my kids, when I shouldn't have done. I've not looked out for the people I've passed by on the streets. I've not responded to God's goodness, in the praise that he deserves.

[ 8 : 42 ] Some people say, humans are good inside. Well, to them I say, you haven't looked in my heart. And they haven't properly looked in their own either.

What united the Egyptian and the Israelite, before he put the blood on the door, is what unites humanity. After being humans, after being in God's images, we are guilty before him. And that has serious consequences.

Here we see it is death. And God is just, and deals with our rejection. He will judge all people, whether dead or alive. This is important to acknowledge.

This is good. This is a good thing. We all actually want justice. When things go wrong, we want those who are to blame to pay. Just look at the response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

We want justice. And rightly, God bringing justice is a good thing. I was reading a book on this recently, by a man called David Gibson.

[ 9 : 45 ] He put it helpfully like this. He said, Judgment, he says, gives my experience losses, and injustices, a voice in God's presence. Every single thing that happens, will have its day in court.

Every single thing that happens, will have its day in court. Justice is good. But the problem is, we don't want judgment. Because we won't be okay.

Our hearts and lives won't stand up in court. Mine won't. Yours won't. We'll face the day, that day in court, just like everyone else. And God's justice requires a death.

This is a dreadful situation. Let's get back to that Israelite. They've been asleep, and the sun rises. And in the distance, there is a noise that fills the sky, and it brings a lump to your throat.

We read it in 11 verse 6. And there will be a great cry, throughout all the land of Egypt. Our Israelite wakes up, to gut-wrenching screams and tears.

[ 11 : 00 ] It's a great cry, a loud wailing. It's in the distance. House after house after house of Egyptians, are pouring out their grief. God's judgment is just and good, but it is not pleasant.

It's horrific. It brings a great cry of anguish. And yet, in houses nearby, listen, there's silence.

It's a stunned silence. Jaws have dropped. It's the silence of amazement, of relief, of safety.

It's the sound of life, of joy, for the Israelite houses. Their sons are alive. God's rescue plan has worked.

Imagine their joy, in that moment. Now, for this Israelite, there was a massive difference in results, wasn't there, that day.

[ 12 : 02 ] One house is wailing, their house is in peace. That he knew, what the real difference was, between them. Between him and the Egyptian.

It wasn't race. It wasn't wealth. It wasn't how good he'd been, that day or week. It was the blood, on the door. It was the death of a lamb, in the place of his son.

He had received, the gift of life, through another's death. He had received, a gift. He hadn't earned it. Now, what's this got to do with us, three and a half thousand years later?

Well, it has everything, to do with us. Because in the Bible, the lamb, that died, has always been, pointing forward. It's a bit like, the shadow of a building, on the ground, that points her eyes up, to the edifice above.

Or like seeing a photo, of someone, and then seeing them, really face to face. That the lamb, is a picture, of Jesus Christ, and his death. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, calls Jesus Christ, the Passover lamb.

[ 13 : 12 ] Jesus himself, institutes the Lord's Supper, on the night, of the Passover celebrations. He clearly, links his own death, to the death, of the Passover lamb. Jesus Christ, dying on the cross, was a Passover lamb, for his people.

When he died, being perfect, being divine, he took, the death, and punishment, not just of the firstborn, but of all his people, of his firstborn.

In his mercy, God has given people, a rescue. As someone trusts, and follows Jesus Christ, it's as if, they painted their house, with blood.

Rather than the death, of a lamb, a Christian is passed over, because they are united, to Jesus Christ. They receive, the gift of life, through another's death.

Now it's important to add, Jesus' death, doesn't save us, from our first death initially. That will face, face us all. No, instead, Jesus saves us, from God's judgment, when Jesus Christ, returns, and gives new life.

[ 14 : 24 ] And just like, to the Israelite, it brings a stunned, silence. It is an incredible thing. Jesus Christ's death, protects us, from the righteous, judgment of God.

What a rescue. Who would not want it, far greater than the death, of a lamb. If you're going to remember, anything from today, listen to this.

Christians are people, who've received, a gift, a gift of life, through another's death. Christians have received, a gift, of life, through another's death.

Jesus' death. If you, are a Christian, may you know, the peace, of your rescue. When Christ returns, it will not be, weeping and wailing, for you.

Christ died, to bring you, that silence. That relief, in the new morning. What a great, saviour he is.

[ 15 : 31 ] What we have, is what Jesus, has done. It's not something, about you, or me. And firstly, that means, our lives, should be characterised, by thankfulness. We should be thankful, to be alive.

After the horrors, of Grenfell Tower, I heard an amazing, story of rescue. It was about a guy, called Christos Fairbairn. He was picked up, by a fireman, on the third, or fourth floor, as he stumbled

around, in the smoke.

And a BBC news article, in it he said, I shouldn't be here today, but I am. And for that, I am grateful. I shouldn't be here today, but I am.

And for that, I am grateful. He knew his life, was a gift. And for the Christian, you just happen to be, the guy the fireman, picked up.

Let's praise God, for his goodness, to us. And secondly, our lives, should be characterised, by humility. We have no basis, for feeling superior.

[ 16 : 35 ] If you remember, that question, I asked at the beginning, why do we look down, on people? Well remember, your identity, that question pointed us to, is a gift.

What you have, you have invested, your life in, is a gift. Boasting about it, feeling superior about it, is like a, a kid who boasts about, their new bike, when they know, they borrowed it, from a mate down the road.

Boasting about it, is hollow, and deceptive. No, our identity, is based on a gift. We can't look down, on those, who aren't following Jesus.

And sometimes, as Christians, we have a reputation, for this, don't we? We have a reputation, for looking down, on others, and that, is a tragedy. Now we can still, disagree with people, with what they believe, and the way they're living.

Sin is still sin, Jesus still calls people, to repent. But we don't come, to people proudly, we don't cocoon ourselves, away from others. Just this week, this past week, I was in Battersea, with a missionary, who was there.

[ 17 : 43 ] And it was amazing, to see someone, who welcomed, anyone, and everyone. Whatever someone's, social status, whatever they wore, or spoke like.

Whatever their education, background, or their history. He treated them, with incredible love, and grace. He would listen, to all of them, with interest. He made people, feel genuinely, loved.

He knew his salvation, in Christ, was a gift. So thankfulness, and humility. And if, you're here today, and you wouldn't call yourself, a Christian.

Now perhaps you thought, becoming a Christian, was just about being good, I've heard that so many times, at working your way to God, then hear this, a Christian is someone, who knows they are not good.

Who knows they need, to be rescued, by another's death. They need, to receive the gift. Now that doesn't mean, the way we live, doesn't matter. But it does mean, there is no one, too bad, to be excluded.

[ 18 : 45 ] Any Egyptian, back in the day, could have trusted God, could have put blood, on their door, and followed Israel, out of Egypt. And some did. Well perhaps you're thinking, well I don't need, to be rescued.

Done a pretty good job, I'll be fine. But I hope you've seen, that that's just not the case. Just think back again, to the way we look down, on people. What identity, were you holding on to?

Will that bring, forgiveness with God? Will you plead, but I was beautiful, but I was smart, but I had a good job, but I cared about politics.

Those things, although good, as an identity, they just enslave us, and they will, not, save us. We need, a rescue. Without it, you will face, God's terrible judgment.

We need God, to deal with our sin. We need, the death, of another for us. And if you realise that, if that's you, can I encourage you, to trust in God's rescue.

[ 19 : 50 ] Come to God, ask for forgiveness, from him, through his amazing rescue, the death, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ, his son. We are all guilty, that a Christian, like the Israelite, pleads, another's death.

Not a lamb, but Jesus Christ, the son of God, who died, and rose again, for his people. I pray to.