

# Exodus 11 & 12

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[ 0 : 00 ] In Exodus 11 and 12, Claire Davis is a church historian, a guy with a woman's name, Claire Davis, who once described the Christian life in this way.

! He said the Christian life is a combination of amnesia and déjà vu. The Christian life is a combination of amnesia and déjà vu.

So we are constantly saying to ourselves as Christians, I know I've forgotten this before. I know I've forgotten this before. I know I've forgotten it.

And that is very helpful, I think, in understanding how you and I follow Christ constantly. That we need to learn and relearn the same lessons over and over again because we keep forgetting that.

It's one of the reasons why it's so important to be in churches every Sunday because we leak. We're like siftings. And we forget. And each time as we go through the series, as we are called to worship, as we send God's triune praise, as we acknowledge that we can only worship him with our help and we pray, as God's word is read, and as we sing of Christ, and as we remember that we need to confess our sins, and we hear those words of pardon, so we rejoice and we come to him with all our needs and we pray, and then we prepare ourselves to hear his holy word.

[ 1 : 27 ] And we leave with the declaration of God's blessing upon us. It is a reminder of the gospel week by week. That is the shape of our service. And we are to learn and relearn the same practices.

And we come back doing the same thing week by week. And at the core of the gospel, the core of the message of the good news, is this recognition, is this confession that I cannot save myself, that only the Lord Jesus can rescue me from our sins, and only by his death on the cross.

And you and I suffer from this ongoing spiritual amnesia. So we start to behave as if our standing with God, our justification that we are right with God, by faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice alone, well, we actually begin to behave functionally like it depends on our record and on how we perform. And so we start thinking like that in our lives, and we start to reflect it in bad, negative ways. So, for example, we start to reflect, and we start to measure ourselves against others.

So we try to put them down so that we begin to feel better about ourselves. Or we start to gossip about other people. Because if we find bad stuff in them, it makes us feel better about ourselves.

[ 2 : 54 ] Or we slip into telling lies. Why do we tell lies? Because telling the truth actually makes us look bad to others. We feel the need to be approved by them.

And all of that results because we've forgotten that we are saved by God's grace alone. That we exist by God's grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when we forget those things as Christians, we fall and we fail. And in his mercy, God is kind to you. And he's kind to me. And he reminds us again and again that you are saved by grace alone. And you live by grace alone. And all of a sudden, we remember this has happened just before. And I can't make it on my own, can I?

I can't make it on my own as a Christian. And I need the Lord Jesus to save me. So Clare Davis is right. The Christian life is a combination of amnesia and déjà vu. And we keep needing to relearn because we keep forgetting.

[ 4 : 01 ] And that idea helps us, I think, when we come to the Bible. And we see that one of the most common refrains, and one of the most common commands, is the word remember.

Remember. Today is Remember Sunday.

But actually, remember in the Bible has a kind of different meaning for the way that we often use remember. When the Bible says remember, it is not just calling you to a minute's silence and to bring to your mind to recollect, a kind of cognitive recollection, that you stop and you think back.

No, when the Bible calls you to remember, it is a call to act. It is a call to act in response to God's promises. So God doesn't forget. But when God remembers, it is he is acting in response to God's promises.

To remember in the Bible is always to do something. Because of some truth that we know. So the result of remembering something in the Bible is actually doing something.

And when you read through the Old Testament, you will discover, of all the things God wanted his people to remember, the most important thing was what we're talking about today. In Exodus 11 and 12.

[ 5 : 12 ] God's rescue of his people out of Egypt. And that was to shape their identity. As his people. So here in Exodus 12, before God actually delivers the Israelites, he's going to give them instructions.

He gives them a special memory aid. And he says, you're going to need to keep on relearning. What you're going to keep forgetting. And so he gives them a Passover meal.

Three times in Exodus 12. God tells Moses that he wants the Passover to become a kind of permanent addition to Israel's calendar. By way of example, this is the first time he tells Moses. Look at them verse 14. This day shall be for you a memorial day, a remembrance day. A memorial day. And you shall keep it as a feast for the Lord throughout your generation.

As a statute forever. You shall keep it as a feast. So the question for us is, why was it so important for the Israelites to remember the Exodus by means of a Passover?

[ 6 : 16 ] And the answer is this. Because through the Passover, God was teaching them the Gospel. Through the Passover, God was teaching them his good news of how people like you and I are saved.

Through the Passover, God was teaching them the Gospel. And so three things. It's a universal need. An exclusive remedy. And then thirdly, an inclusive invitation. So first of all, a universal need. Last time, we saw how God responded. Do you remember Pharaoh? He kept hardening his heart.

And he refused to let Moses and the Israelites leave. And God begins for sending plagues.

Plague after plague. And they are glimpses. There are glimpses there, aren't there, of Pharaoh relenting. But we read, even when he begins to relent, time and time again, he hardens his heart.

And he will not let the Israelites go. And so now we come to chapter 11, chapter 12, and you come to the tenth plague, the final plague. And it's through this final plague that God is going to enable the Israelites to leave, to get freedom.

[ 7 : 26 ] But what is important for us to see here is this rescue plan on God's part is about much, much more than getting the Israelites out of Egypt. The rescue plan is not going to just address the sin, the wrongdoing of Pharaoh and the sin of the Egyptians.

It is going to address the sin of the Israelites. It's going to not only deal a final break between Pharaoh and the Israelites in that relationship, but it's actually going to be the foundation in the ongoing relationship between Israel and God.

And that's why they were to remember it. In other words, it is going to point the Israelites to the fact that they have sinned. That God's people need redemption as well as everybody else.

Let me just flesh that up for you. If you were here last time, you might recall that God protected the Israelites. You might not realise that. From at least some of the plagues. So the plague of hail, hail and death of the cattle.

God bypassed the region where the Israelites were living. But you've got to figure out, haven't you, if you'd been in Egypt and living in Goshen where the Israelites lived, you would have been spared as well.

[ 8 : 41 ] So it didn't matter who you were, really. To avoid the demonstration of the plagues, all that mattered in those particular cases was that you were in the right postcode.

That's all that mattered. If you were in the right postcode when it came to the hail and the plague on the cattle, you were saved. But as God explains to Moses the tenth plague, and as he explains how they were to observe the Passover, this plague will work differently.

This plague was going to be on every firstborn throughout all of Egypt. Every firstborn throughout all of Egypt. Cruddy things. So one of the interesting things, one of the bizarre things about the Old Testament when you read it, is how God claims the firstborn in all of life to be his.

So he explicitly describes it in the following chapter, in chapter 13, verse 2, where God says, consecrate to me all the firstborn. All the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among

the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.

Now there's a lot that can be said about that, but the underlying reason that God makes this claim is to remind the people that ultimately everything belongs to God.

[ 9 : 59 ] The firstborn he claimed because everything else belongs to him as well. So he claimed the firstborn cattle. He claimed the first fruits of the harvest. But most significantly, he claims the firstborn sons.

And there's a particular reason, isn't there, why he's claiming the firstborn sons in Egypt here. Because actually, the response is following up on what he said would happen in chapter 4. That God had given Pharaoh this ultimatum.

So just flip back to chapter 4, verses 22 and 23. God tells Moses, the sage of Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son.

And I say to you, let my son go, that he may serve me. But if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son. So by subjecting Israel, who God says, is my firstborn son, God has essentially claimed the firstborn for himself.

Which was a claim of sorts to be God himself. That's what Pharaoh had done. By Pharaoh claiming Israel, no, I'm in charge. He is claiming the firstborn son.

[ 11 : 11 ] He is claiming to be God himself. And God says, no, they belong to me. And God says to Pharaoh, if you are going to claim the firstborn son, which actually is my right, then just this demands I will claim yours.

So in Exodus 11, just go forward there, God specifically says, verse 4, So Moses said, thus says the Lord, about midnight, I will go into the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.

For the firstborn of Pharaoh sits on the throne, even the firstborn of the slave girl is beyond the hand mill, and all the firstborn in the capital. The firstborn belong to God because everything belongs to God.

But here's the second thing worth thinking about. Within Egypt, there would be no geographical exemption regarding this plague. The death of the firstborn would come to every home in Egypt, unless particular instructions were followed.

And we need to think about why is this plague different to all the others? There was this restriction, wasn't there, in the other plagues? But why is this one so extensive? Why does this one have the potential to kill the firstborn of the Israelites?

[ 12 : 20 ] Can you see that? But it was not only the firstborn of the Egyptians, but every firstborn. And the reason was this. God is teaching you this.

It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter who you are. Everybody needs a saviour.

Everybody needs a saviour. And there was at least one common factor between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and it was this, that by nature, every single person, whether Egyptian or Israelite or Welsh or English or American was by nature rebellious against God.

That every single one of us has got an innate sinful bias away from God in our lives. So that is true of every single one of us, isn't it? I grew up in a little village outside Swansea, and if you said a let's go bowling, what that meant was not temp in bowling, was that on a Monday night the older people in the village would gather up on through a village hall and they would lay out a long green mat and they would put a little white ball at one end of the green mat and they would roll these black heavy balls towards it.

I don't know whether you know it. I think Terry is kind of a superstar of bowling in our area, aren't you? Kind of the Lionel Messi of bowling. But it's a great thing for some of us young people and some of us teenagers where we didn't have much else to do.

It's a great sport, actually. It's a great sport to watch on TV. Very relaxing. What you find, though, is you pick up the black ball and you roll it and you think that it'll go straight, but it doesn't.

[ 13 : 55 ] It rears off to the side. So you turn the ball over and you roll it the other way, but it happens again and it rears and you suddenly realise there is a bias in the ball.

And it is impossible for the ball to go straight even if you fire it down really fast. In the end, it will veer off to one side or the other. It is impossible for the bowling ball to go straight.

That's the same with your heart and my heart. That there is a bias in it. That you and I, our hearts, we veer away from God. Every human being possesses this bias.

We can deny it, but we do. Ask the person that you live with. It steals us away from God. And no matter how hard you and I try, we end up messing up, don't we?

We go to disobey God. You might not trust God, but you end up hurting somebody else. You end up hurting each other. That we seek fulfillment in the wrong places.

[14:58] We become proud and arrogant because that is a symptom of the bias in our hearts. And in Moses' day, it was not just a problem from Egypt and Pharaoh and the bad guys.

God leads them to understand there's a problem for everyone. There's a bias in every single one of us. And it is impossible for you and I to go straight morally. It's impossible for us to be wholly straight to go that wholly straight and godly path God calls us to.

All of us veer away from God. And the reason it is important for you and I to think about this today is because the Bible says if that is true by nature, we are cut off from God.

And we are subject to his judgment. And you cannot go in a different direction from the one God calls you to and expect no consequences.

You can't. And the consequence of our sinful bias the Bible says is his eternal judgment upon us. Unless there is some kind of intervention from God.

[16:04] Two roads running together and one of them veers away so that there is a separation. Think about that. That is what the Bible says. That if you continue on your own there is this separation from you and God.

Unless there is some kind of intervention. And so God could not offer a geographical exemption on this one. Every Israelite like every human being was in debt to God. And God had the right to take the firstborn son in every family not just because they belonged to him but in order to call in the debt that they owed to him.

Because everyone suffers from this bias. Everyone has their sin. The universal need that had to be addressed. Secondly the exclusive remedy. The exclusive remedy to take care of this need.

God says there is one way and there is only one way that you can avoid the death of your firstborn son. And here it is. He says I will accept a substitute a substitute payment instead of your firstborn son.

God tells Moses to tell every household to kill a lamb. To kill a one year old lamb without any blemish. And once the lamb was killed we'll hear the instructions verse 7 chapter 11 chapter 12 In this manner you shall eat it with your belt fastened and your sons on your feet and your staff and your ham and you shall eat it in his it is the Lord's Passover.

[17:35] Sorry that's verse 11 it's verse 7 Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

Now why were they to do that? Why were they to do that slightly weird thing? God explains it a few verses later in verses 12 and 13 He says I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and I will strike all the firstborn of the land of Egypt both man and beast and all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments I am the Lord and the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are and when I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I speak the land of Egypt It's hard to fathom I think what it must have been like to be an Israelite that night put yourself in their sandals for a moment you listen to those instructions and you imagine what it's like to receive them for the first time imagine what it is like trying to explain that to your children because as the Israelites you've never done anything like that before you've never roasted a lamb in that particular way and you certainly have never gathered its blood for this special purpose and you certainly have never painted the blood on the doorposts and the lintel over the door it is bizarre isn't it?

it is bizarre and weird and it's absolutely necessary because without this payment of blood God could not forgive anybody's sin and that is so important to grasp that if you're going to understand the Bible at all that God cannot forgive us without a payment some of us may have got a laissez-faire attitude towards our sin God will forgive me that's his job Voltaire said but it's not his job it's not his job at all the fact is God cannot forgive without a payment without the shedding of blood the Bible says there is no forgiveness of sins no one forgives without a payment I've used this illustration quite recently but I think it works imagine I invited my family over with you for lunch and you've given us a great meal and you've served dessert in the best crystal dishes there were thousands they've been passed on to you by your great grandmother

I'm being the nice guy that I am I offer to clear the dishes from the table but unfortunately I overestimate how much I can carry and I proceed to drop two of the crystal dishes upon the floor life

goes into slow motion at that point and they break into many pieces of course I am horrified and embarrassed not as embarrassed or horrified or annoyed as my family is but I say to you I am really sorry I will pay I will pay and I'll of course pay to replace them and you say no it's it's ok I forgive you now hit the pause button there for a minute ok what happened to the price of those dishes what happens then what happens in terms of repayment you've forgiven me so there's no payment necessary right no the answer is no there's still a payment isn't there there's still the cost of breaking those dishes they didn't that didn't just disappear at that point point at that point by forgiving me you are saying you will bear the cost of those dishes yourself and that will either mean buying two dishes to replace them or having too fewer dishes than you had at the start of the day but somebody has still got to pay haven't they even though you've forgiven me and if you've forgiven me so I don't have to pay you have agreed to pay because you see any time there is forgiveness that involves payment it always involves payment no one forgives without there being some kind of payment and with

God it's the same he cannot forgive us without there being some form of payment and that is what we see here for God to forgive Israel for God to redeem Israel he tells Moses here's what the payment must be it will be a lamb and what is the sign of that payment it will be the blood of the lamb on your door so the Israelites knew as God instructed each family we're told in some cases some families sharing together they got a year old male lamb without defect and they took care of the lamb from the tenth to the fourteenth day and then they slaughtered the animal at twilight and then they would take a bunch of hyssop and a pink brush and they would dip it in the lamb's blood and they would put it on the doorpost out on the lintel and they eat the meat and the last part of the instruction was as vital as everything else you see what the last part of the instruction is in a little while the instructions were changed and it would be go out stay out and leave but this night is the exact opposite it is stay in it is stay under the cover of the blood of the lamb because the only place that was safe that night was under the blood so the truth of the matter was this on that night every single house in

[ 23 : 10 ] Egypt had a death every single house in Egypt either had a dead son or a dead lamb there was no option to see it was one or the other in a house where the lamb had been slaughtered the firstborn son could have said you know the only reason I'm not dead right now is because he is the lamb was the substitute the exclusive remedy that you could have that was there to address the need the lamb died in his place because the lamb died the firstborn son didn't have to now you wind the tape on 1500 years or so and a picture comes to your mind doesn't it of a certain John the baptist standing by the side of the river and John sees Jesus coming towards him and what does John say he says hey look there's Jesus now he says behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world accidents and those around him trying to figure out what he's going on about think what are you talking about John but John knows exactly what he's talking about that he understood that the lamb who was sacrificed in each household all those years before that first Passover that lamb was a pointer a massive pointer because in reality those lambs could never be a true substitute for man or woman or boy or girl could they that you and I need a substitute who is truly a substitute one who is like us a person not an animal and even more than that not just any person but somebody who could pay our debt someone who had no debt to pay himself someone who was without blemish someone who was sinless in other words we needed somebody who was called Jesus the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world that you and I have this debt but Jesus the lamb of God and he comes to pay the debt for us so that with his payment with his shedding of blood the blood of the lamb and the cross we can be forgiven this morning and suddenly with Jesus it comes into a much clearer focus than it did with the blood of the lamb in Egypt the first born son in Egypt would say the only reason I did not die is because of the lamb the lamb died in my place so what does the Christian say today the Christian says the only reason I will not die is because the lamb has died for me and just as the is right sheltered under the blood of the lamb to be protected from judgment so you and I are called to shelter under the blood of the lamb so that we are protected from judgment because you see Jesus is exclusive remedy there is no other way that is why in the ministry of Jesus he says I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father but through me he is exclusive remedy it is only because of his blood that we can be forgiven the debt that we owe can only be satisfied by him but there is more to it than that because as you look at Jesus death through the lens of the parable you realise that his death gives us forgiveness which is wonderful but we are not just forgiven do you see that the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world he is not just the lamb of God but remember what we saw a couple of weeks ago he is

god's ultimate firstborn son and so he is the one who could do which is what israel could not do so think about this in the past of god spared the firstborn sons of israel through the death of the lamb but now with jesus the firstborn son is the lamb so who is he sparing now the ultimate firstborn son was not spared because it is only by his blood that you could not only be forgiven but you could become sons and daughters of the living god so that you and i could be adopted into his family so that now we have the same rights the same privileges as the ultimate son of god the lord jesus we are co-heirs with christ we are heirs with god we are not we are not just forgiven we are adopted into his family because the firstborn son was the lamb of god who pays for our sin he is the exclusive remedy for our need he is the only remedy for our need and we need to acknowledge that there are many of our mates our friends who object to christianity exclusivity here you may say one of the things i really don't like about biblical christianity is how you claim jesus is the only way to eternal life how can you claim that he is the only way to forgiveness how arrogant now i think one of the most helpful ways to respond to get our friends is to see the!

remedy to sin is an exclusive remedy it is an exclusive remedy the invitation to that remedy is unreservedly inclusive unreservedly inclusive it is for everyone that's the third point unreservedly inclusive invitation inclusive invitation there are no preconditions to get this remedy for you it doesn't matter what your past is it doesn't matter what your pedigree is it doesn't matter what religious phenomenon nation you are, it doesn't matter what serving you have, it doesn't matter what school you went to, what post school you live in.

Christianity's remedy is exclusive. There is one answer. There is one answer to your problem. It is the blood of the Lamb, but the invitation to the remedy is inclusive to anybody and to everybody. To the single, to the divorced, to the straight, to the homosexual. To anyone. There is a great church, isn't there?

[ 29 : 23 ] In Wimbledon, in Manor, Wimbledon. It's in this very posh, leafy suburb and they designed a poster which is done in a kind of really beautiful high class manner which says pimps, perverts and prostitutes welcome every Sunday morning.

It's a great thing to say. There is one answer. And yet the invitation is for all. What's the criteria for being protected that night in Egypt?

It wasn't being an Israelite. It wasn't being circumcised. Or in the covenant sign. It didn't make a difference if your name was Moses or Aaron that night.

Look again at verse 13. The blood will be a sign on the houses for you, where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass out to you. Protection was guaranteed to anyone who sacrificed the lamb and put blood on the door for us.

It doesn't matter who you are. The remedy would apply later in chapter 12 where we see this fulfilled. By talking about many people went out with the Israelites, it means that as the Israelites left Egypt, there were others beside the Israelites who were part of them.

[ 30 : 27 ] who'd sheltered under the blood that night because they realised it was the only solution for them. So this invitation to shelter under the blood of the lamb comes with no restrictions this morning.

And it's a reminder to you and to me that he is willing to offer us eternal life. And he's not looking for some kind of preconditions. God is not waiting for you to give him a solution.

On the day of judgment, he will not ask you whether you're a Baptist, a Presbyterian, an Anglican, a Brethren, a Catholic or whatever. He will ask you, did you shelter under the blood of the Lord Jesus? Because if you didn't shelter there, if you didn't sit under the blood, if you didn't realise that that was the only remedy possible, nothing will help you.

But if you did shelter under the blood, then forgiveness and adoption and all the benefits are yours. And I hope you see that what fabulous news is, because my guess for us this morning is that for some of us, every day is a battle with shame and guilt.

There's something in our past, and there are things in our past which we've not shared with any, or we've not shared with many, if any. And the guilt is just too much, and we figure out, if we told it to other people, they would reject us.

[ 31 : 47 ] But God says this offer is for you. And God says this offer is for you. Unreservedly to anyone, and to everyone. Sit under the blood, and whatever that thing is you've had hanging around your neck for years or decades, it can be forgiven.

Some of you today, you've never really thought that you owe a debt to God at all. You think God, God might not be pleased with me, how's that? And it's not enough for you to think that some of them will be okay, I go to IPC.

It's not enough to think everything will be okay. You can be forgiven for how evil you are. If you rest under the blood, it's the most inclusive offer and invitation in the whole world.

So how do you accept the invitation? How do you do that? In the same way the Israelites did, it's by faith. It's faith that demonstrates itself in obedience. Where you say, I am now trusting in Jesus, I'm going to seek to serve and follow him unreservedly in my life, no holds barred.

You long to please him in every aspect of life, and we don't have time to look at it here, but there is here, there's called ongoing obedience. That God was teaching the Israelites with the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, get rid of the yeast, and so forth.

[ 33 : 16 ] For us to follow the celebration of the Passover. The fact is that God has made an inclusive offer to you. And the way to receive it is by faith and by trust. The announcement that Moses made to the people probably sounded as bizarre to them as what I'm saying to you.

Moses said, there is this unstoppable force of the destroyer that is going to come through who will kill all the firstborn sons, and there is one way to avoid it. Alarm. The people think this is a joke, right?

Fluffy and muffy. They're the way out. They're the way out of death. Of course not. Are you kidding me? No, Moses says that is right. And you've got to believe it.

They took it by faith. They took a lamb and they killed it. They put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel. And do you know what happened that night for those who said, I don't need a lamb.

I'm an Israelite. It's been good enough for me up to this point. I can circumcise. I've received the sign of God's covenant. That's good enough for me. Well, that night there was a dead son in their house.

[ 34 : 25 ] And there was an empty chair at the breakfast table. And for those who moan, come on, 400 years of slavery, we've had it so hard. If I miss this one little thing at this point, surely God's going to forgive me.

Well, there was a dead son in the house that night and an empty chair at the breakfast table. And for those who sneered at Moses' instructions and they trotted off thinking, after all I've done, I'm a decent person.

I've been a good Israelite. I've done my best. This can't apply to me. There was a dead son in the house that night and an empty chair at the breakfast table. This redemption only comes through faith and it demonstrates itself in obedience.

And the same faith required then is required now and there is no other way of rescue, there is no other way of redemption. Because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. If we met one of the Israelites, let me picture this, if we met one of the Israelites in the wilderness having left India and we'd say, tell me your story.

Who are you? What are you about? Their story could have gone something like this. Well, I was an alien in a foreign land under the penalty of death and I took shelter under the blood of the lamb.

[ 35 : 39 ] Even though morally, ethically, racially, I couldn't save myself. I was saved and now I'm living in the wilderness. And I know that I'm on my way to the promised land.

And that is the story of every Christian. That is the story of every follower of Jesus Christ. Why do I tell you this today? Because you and I have forgotten this before, haven't we?

And we've forgotten this gospel before and that's why we've messed up this week. And so in this journey of amnesia and deja God is reminding us and he reminds us again and again and again that it is by this gospel we are ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.

And it is only because of the blood of the lamb. Let's pray.