

Exodus 12:1-28

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Preacher: Dave Clemo

[0:00] Well, good evening. It's really great to be here with you. My name's Dave. I'm a student at Union School of Theology in Wales! And it's really good to be able to visit and open up God's Word together.

Let's pray before we do that. Father God, it's an amazing thing, an awesome thing, that you speak to us as we gather together as your people.

And we want to be those who tremble at your Word. And so we pray that you would give us ears to hear, give us soft hearts to listen and hear and understand what you are saying to us this evening. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. New Year is a funny time, isn't it? I think it provokes different reactions in different people.

For some of us, the fresh start of a new year makes us think, right, I need to get my life together. I need to be better this year. And it's not just about joining the gym or getting fit.

[1:11] If we're Christians, we want to glorify God more. We want to serve Him more. We want to love Him more. To grow and to develop to maturity in Christ.

Maybe we've got New Year's resolutions and things like that. But for some of us, the start of a year just makes us feel tired. Here we go again.

You know, trying to summon enough energy to just keep going, let alone making resolutions and making changes. And after the year that we've had, I'm sure many of us are feeling a little bit like that.

Weary and flat, rather than raring to go. But what is it that we need at the start of a new year? What do we need as Christians?

Do we need a pep talk? Someone to give us a motivational, rousing speech to rouse us to be better this year? Well, God said that there's one thing that His people need every year.

[2:12] He commanded them to do it without fail in the first month, every new year. And you can summarize it in one word. Remember. Chapter 12, verse 14 says, This day shall be for you a memorial day.

In other words, take a day to remember. They were required every new year to remember one thing. And it wasn't a to-do list. It wasn't a list of resolutions and things to do to improve this upcoming year.

God wanted them to remember their redemption. Chapter 13, verse 3 says, Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place.

He's saying, Start the year looking back to that monumental event when God rescued you from slavery. In fact, this was so important that God actually changed the calendar.

Did you see that in verse 2 of chapter 12? This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. In other words, New Year for Israel used to be in September, but God changed it to March, because that's when he brought them out of Egypt.

[3:32] You need to start your year remembering that event, God says. Remember that I saved you. So every year they did this special ritual of Passover to reenact the redemption from Egypt.

And at the start of this year, 2022, God's people need the same thing. We need to remember our redemption. Instead of looking forward to this new year, we first need to look back.

Instead of what we're going to do for God, we need to remember what he's done for us. And this is so helpful. It's so wise of God that he gives his people sacraments.

That he gave the Passover in the old administration. And he gives the Lord's Supper in the new. Because one of the things that he's doing is he's calling us to remembrance. To do this in remembrance of him.

And we need this. Whether we tend to activism or cynicism. Whether we think, I'm going to go and do all these great things for God this year. Or whether we're just thinking, how am I going to keep going this year?

[4:39] This reminds us that salvation is all of God. We may be desperate weaklings, but God is strong. He has done it all. And he will complete his redemptive work in us.

And that's what's going to keep us going whatever we might face this year. That's what we're thinking about this evening. Remember your redemption. But before we dive into exactly what Passover commemorates, a quick refresher of where we are in Exodus.

If you know the plot of Exodus, it's on the edge of your seat kind of stuff. God's people are slaves in Egypt, and they're having a really bad time. They've gone through an attempted genocide where Jewish babies were being thrown into the Nile.

They're ruthlessly worked. They're beaten and treated like animals. But God hears their cries. He remembers his covenant with Abraham. And so he sends Moses to bring his people out of Egypt. But God knows that Pharaoh is a stubborn guy. His heart is rock hard towards Yahweh, the God of Israel. So God sends horrible plagues on Egypt.

[5:49] Plague after plague, but Pharaoh won't give in. And now God says to Moses, I'm going to send one final plague, and this time Pharaoh will let you go.

This plague is the worst of them all, the final judgment on Egypt, basically. The plague of the firstborn. And this is what we're going to see.

Here's the thing, the first thing that Passover helps us to remember. God's people are spared from God's strike. That's the first point.

God's people are spared from God's strike. Flick back a page to chapter 11 and verse 4. So Moses said, Thus says the Lord, About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.

From the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on the throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who's behind the hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.

[6:56] This is a serious plague. Every single firstborn son in the whole of Egypt is going to die. They'll wake up the next morning, and there'll be bodies of loved ones.

It's a scary, terrible thing. But, verse 7, Not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know, that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

So when Israel sees this plague unfold, what is the thing that God wants them to learn? Did you hear it? Yahweh makes a distinction between his people and Egypt.

They'll be weeping all over Egypt, but you, my people, you will be safe. This comes out really clearly in chapter 12, verse 27. Moses says, When you've done this strange Passover ritual on New Year's, your kids are going to ask you, What is this all about?

What does it mean? And here's what you should tell them. Verse 27, That's the summary of what Passover means.

[8:21] It says there, Tell your kids God struck the Egyptians, but spared us. He made a distinction. God's people were spared from his strike.

You know, if you read on a bit further, this distinction is the reason why only God's people were allowed to celebrate and join in the Passover festival. It says in verse 43, No foreigner shall eat of it, but, verse 47, all the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

You see how clear the distinction is that God makes between his people and the other nations. In fact, the only way that strangers could participate in the Passover was to become one of God's covenant people.

Verse 48, it says, Let all his males be circumcised, then he may come near and keep it. He shall be as a native of the land. God makes a distinction between his people and the other nations, between

Egypt and between his people.

Imagine being one of those Israelites who'd been redeemed, whose family had been spared on that first Passover. A few years later, you're gathered around the table celebrating this Passover meal like you do every year.

[9:40] And you can't help looking at your older brother, the firstborn son, thinking, the only reason that he's alive right now is because God stayed his hand.

He spared us. It was literally a destroying angel slaughtering the firstborn sons all over the country, in the palace, in the servants' quarters, even in the fields.

Even the cows didn't escape. But we escaped. You remember the wailing in Egypt when all the firstborn died. And you remember the relief when your family, when your people were spared. It could have been us. It should have been us. But God spared us. So remembering God's redemption involved remembering that they were spared from God's strike.

That's the first point. But if God makes a distinction, what is it? What is it that marks God's people out? What makes us any different from the world?

[10:43] What made Israel any different from Egypt? You might say that Egypt were the oppressors and Israel were the victims. Or you might think Israel were just better than Egypt.

They followed God's commands whereas Egypt were rebels. But even if you don't know the story of Israel and how completely awful they were most of the time, this chapter really shows us that it's got nothing to do with that.

The only difference was blood. Israel was ransomed by the blood. That's our second point.

Ransomed by blood.

What do you think was at the center of the Passover ritual? There are lots of little details involved but the main thing was slaughter. A lamb was slaughtered and its blood was painted on your doorpost.

It's strange, isn't it? It's unpleasant. But if you're a Christian this bloody ritual strikes to the very core of who we are and where we come from.

[11:46] Look down with me to chapter 12 verse 3. God said to Moses, Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their father's houses.

A lamb for a household. Then verse 6, You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lamb at twilight.

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. What was the point of this? Why did they need their doorposts dripping with blood?

This is a strange thing to do, isn't it? Can you imagine doing this every new year? Squirting a load of sheep's blood on your front door? Why? Well, verse 12 tells us the reason.

God says, I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments.

[12:55] I am the Lord. 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 strike the land of Egypt.

The only difference between an Israelite and an Egyptian was the blood on their doorposts. The difference between God striking you and God sparing you is the blood.

It was the sign, it was the thing that marked you out as one of God's people. And this is so important, it's repeated again. Verse 23, For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians and when he sees the blood the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.

When the destroyer came, was he looking for how righteous they'd been? How well they were doing spiritually? No. He was looking for one thing. The blood.

Is the blood on the doorpost? It's all about the blood. God's people were spared because they were under the blood of the lamb. Isn't that surprising?

[14:14] The mark of God's people is the blood of a baby sheep. What does it mean? And it's all about ransom. What comes to mind when you hear the

word ransom?

I tend to think of a hostage situation. A bit like in films, somebody's being kidnapped and the kidnapper sets a ransom. Pay me a million pounds and they'll live.

And so that person is ransomed with that price of a million pounds. And it's a similar idea here except this time imagine the kidnapper sets the ransom price as a swap.

A life for a life. The hostage will live if you come and die in their place. And that's the kind of thing that's going on here with the lamb.

Israel has sinned and rebelled against God. They deserve judgment just like Egypt. Someone has to die. It's not that God said it's okay I'll let you guys off because we've got history.

[15:16] No, judgment still fell. It just fell on someone else. How many lambs do you think were slaughtered on that day? A lot. A lot of blood on a lot of doorposts to ransom sinful Israel.

They were ransomed by the blood. This is at the center of who we are and of our story. These ancient historical events this ancient ritual is for us today.

It was never intended to be purely about rescue from Egypt. It was always about the Lord Jesus Christ and his great redemptive work for his people. Do you remember what Jesus did when he celebrated the Passover with his disciples?

They were doing exactly what Exodus 12 says to do. Remembering the redemption from Egypt through this ritual. And Jesus breaks the unleavened bread and he says take this.

This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of what? Of me. You see that Jesus is telling them celebrate the Passover not just in memory of Egypt but in memory of me.

[16:30] It's about me. He takes the wine and says drink it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

In other words I am the lamb. I am your Passover lamb whose blood ransoms you whose flesh you eat in remembrance of me. In a few hours his blood will be spilled not on the doorpost but on a wooden cross the ransom price for our freedom.

Did it ever impact you how high our ransom price was? When we were hostages to sin and death what was the ransom price over our heads?

What was the father willing to pay for our redemption? One Peter says it wasn't perishable things like silver and gold there would never be enough gold in all the universe to pay our ransom.

No, we had to be ransomed at the highest cost imaginable something of infinite value the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spots.

[17:42] he gave up his own son for us his only son God the father gave his beloved beautiful son to be slaughtered like an animal for our ransom it's actually impossible isn't it for us to really take that in but as the Holy Spirit applies that to our hearts it changes everything we've been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ and that is an awesome fact.

you know one day Christ will come again and God has appointed him to judge the world this time it won't just be Egypt but everyone multitudes billions of people before the throne of judgment how will he know who to spare?

Revelation tells us that God has a book of life where the names of all his elect all his chosen people are written every single one who's been redeemed everyone who's been ransomed none of them are missing this one is under the blood this one and that one are under the blood we are spared the strike of God because we're ransomed by the blood we've seen that Passover calls us to remember our redemption we've seen that's not a vague kind of thing we're remembering specifically that we're spared from God's strike his strike of judgment because we've been ransomed by Christ's blood so finally we're going to circle back around to that main point of remembering our redemption what does that actually look like?

how should we apply this to ourselves as God's people? well for the original readers the main application was pretty simple keep the Passover chapter 12 verse 14 says this day shall be for you a memorial day and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations as a statute forever you shall keep it as a feast or verse 17 you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a statute forever again verse 24 you shall observe this rite as a statute for you and

for your sons forever it was obvious what Israel was supposed to do keep it observe it do it we're under the same covenant of grace but it's administered differently isn't it?

we don't celebrate the Passover in our churches we saw earlier that Jesus transitioned really naturally from the Passover to the Lord's Supper Passover was always about Christ and now in the Lord's Supper we celebrate him as our Passover lamb we participate in his body and in his blood shed for us so a very simple application is let's continue celebrating the Lord's Supper together as his people and we're going to do that I believe in a moment I think it's particularly helpful at the beginning of the year to let this root and ground us in grace as we share in this sign and seal of our redemption we remember that we are the redeemed people of God ransomed by blood so we enjoy we celebrate the fact that we've done absolutely nothing to earn our salvation if nothing else is clear in the Lord's Supper that is we were ransomed by someone else we participate in him in his body and in his blood it's a bit like that hostage who's been ransomed he was sitting there tied to a chair with a blindfold on in bondage to his kidnapper but someone's paid the ransom price for his freedom he walks out the door blinking in the sunlight he's free but can you imagine if he goes around congratulating himself on his daring escape boasting about how he managed to survive that would be ridiculous delusional someone else paid for him to be free do you know what's even more ridiculous if the freed hostage went around moping saying I don't deserve to be free

[22:07] I'm too much of a bad person it's my fault I ended up a hostage in the first place I don't deserve to be free and he continues to live as if he was still a captive even though the ransom has been paid that would be crazy too wouldn't it we've been ransomed by God and we did nothing to contribute and God won't let us forget that he commands us in his grace to remember our redemption he's given us this gracious sacrament of the Lord's supper saying do this continually remembrance of me what a gracious God you have so let's start this year resting in his redemption enjoying our freedom celebrating his finished work on our behalf let's cheerfully press on in full dependence on Christ our Passover land Amen