

'Nothing but the Blood'

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[0 : 00] The Christian life is a combination of both amnesia and déjà vu.

So writes one church historian, amnesia and déjà vu of forgetting and being reminded over! I know I've forgotten this before.

As God's people, we need to keep learning the same lessons again and again, to be reminded of all that God has done in delivering us from slavery to sin.

The evidence of forgetting could be found in many places, but just think back to your own week. Perhaps even think back to this very morning. Think about ways we've been tempted and temptations we've given into.

Maybe getting unduly annoyed for somebody stealing our parking space. The lustful Luke, trusting our own works to put us right with God.

[1 : 07] Whatever it is, this week, all of us at points will have forgotten the gospel. And we need constant reminding. As we come to Exodus 12 this morning, that is one of the surprises, at least I think something unexpected for us.

We've had, haven't we, nine rounds in the ring. This cosmic battle. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who thinks he's a god and all the kind of local gods of Egypt in one corner.

In the other, Yahweh, the great I am, creator of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who has come to set his people free and demonstrate that he alone is God.

It's been nine rounds of utter mismatch. But in each round, God kind of turning up the heat more and more on Pharaoh and Egypt. Now, here this morning, we come to the tenth and final round, the tenth and final plague.

And what might we anticipate after, well, what, 430 years of slavery in Egypt? That's what verse 40 told us, didn't it? 430 years in Egypt. And so what might we expect?

[2 : 22] We'd expect God to kind of deal the final blow, send the last plague, free his people, defeat the dragon, the serpent king of Egypt, get his people out of there.

Then let's speak to Moses and Aaron about kind of setting a reminder on their phones and in their diaries to remember this event. You would kind of think we've had all these years, all these rounds, let's get out.

We'll sort out remembering it later at family gatherings and get-togethers. But do you notice God doesn't do that? He tells Moses and Aaron now.

But between rounds nine and ten, the need for all Israel, all his people, and all generations to come to remember this night, to remember all that is about to happen.

The boxer in the ring about to land a final blow. Can you picture the scene there? Imagine his team bringing him over to the corner and saying, let's discuss what we're going to do after this fight.

[3 : 28] Who's going to publish the book about this victory? Who's going to play you in the film? Maybe we'll get Tom Cruise, something like that. I know, let's organize a world tour. That would be unusual. You'd think, no, hang on, the fight isn't over yet.

It's unusual. So why would something like that happen? Well, I can think of two reasons. One, victory is secured. You know you're about to land the final blow. And victory is secured here.

God has said he will win and defeat Pharaoh, so he will. But perhaps there's a second reason here, a second reason. It's because what's about to happen is defining for you.

This victory changes everything. Cassius Clay defeating Sonny Liston, propelled into the spotlight. What happens here is how you're going to be remembered.

Well, God here, before landing the final knockout blow, tells Moses and Aaron, you are going to remember this year after year, father to son to their son, generation to generation, for this is a defining moment for Israel.

[4 : 34] Now, let's see that in the text. Verse 2 hints at it, doesn't it? This idea of remembering the Passover and Exodus is to what? Mark the creation of a new calendar.

Their very time and year is going to be kind of measured by this event. Verse 14, this will be a memorial day. Keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout all generations as a statute forever. Halfway through verse 17, you get it again. Observe this throughout your generations as a statute forever. Verse 24, 25, 26.

Moses and Aaron explain God's instructions to the elders of Israel. This is a statute forever. When, what? When you get to the land. Hang on, we're still in Egypt. But no, no, already thinking of the land.

And when your children ask, dinner, table, talk. Dad, why are we having lamb tonight? Why unleavened bread? Why is it not McDonald's this evening? Why not fish and chips?

[5 : 38] At this mealtime, we're eating this because of what happened then and God freeing his people from Egypt. And then right there at the end of verse 42, summary verses.

What does it say? Throughout all generations. Of all the things Israel are to remember. Indeed, of all the plagues that they are to remember.

This tenth plague. And how God saves them from it. The salvation it brings. As Pharaoh finally lets them go. They are to remember.

Let's consider then how that salvation comes about and look at it more closely. And why indeed it is so significant for them to remember.

So they are to remember the salvation God gives. We are to remember the salvation God gives.

Firstly, through the blood of a lamb. Again, I think we have another surprise here, don't we?

[6 : 37] At the start of chapter 12. In verses 3 to 13. There hasn't really been anything like this before in Exodus so far, has there? Does the book of Exodus tell us what the Israelites were building with their bricks?

No. Does it tell us what Pharaoh's palace is like? No. But it must have been very grand. Does it tell us the other ancient kind of Near Eastern kind of diets and foodstuffs?

The kind of Gordon Ramseys and Delia Smiths of Egypt. Or whoever your favorite cookery kind of person is. Right? Does it tell us all that stuff in Exodus? Right? No. It doesn't tell us any of that. But all of a sudden we arrive at the start of chapter 12. And we get in lots of granular detail all about this meal. All about this meal. And that should surprise us.

It should make us take note. Why are we getting all of this? Why so much detail? Well, first let's look at what God tells them to do. What does God tell them to do as they talk about this meal?

[7 : 42] Verses 3 and 4. On this night that the plague is going to come, verse 3 and 4, what are they to do? Well, they're to get a lamb, one that can be eaten according to the number of persons.

Verse 5. It's to be without blemish, a year old, a male. Keep it until the 14th. Then the whole assembly shall kill their lambs at twilight together. The instructions go on.

Some of the blood is to be put above the doors of the house. How is the lamb to be eaten? Verses 8 and 9. Roasted, not boiled. Legs and inner parts.

Don't leave any of it. And if any of it is left, you're to burn it. So I think you'd agree, right? This is very, very specific. This is can't really go wrong with these kind of instructions.

Probably even more detail than you might get on a kind of BBC good food guide cooking thing.

Okay, very specific. But there's even more, isn't there? They're also told what to wear.

[8 : 40] And that's something probably not included when you look up your recipe menu for whatever you're having for Sunday lunch. Okay, they're told what they're to eat in. What are they to eat in? Verse 11.

You shall eat this way with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. So why all the detail?

Why all the detail about the lamb and the blood and the clothing? Because judgment is coming. Because judgment is coming.

The tenth plague. Verse 12. For 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.

I am the Lord. So we arrive here. The tenth round. The tenth plague. And the stakes now could be no higher, could they?

[9 : 43] The death of a firstborn. Now I guess the question is, why? Why the firstborn son of both man and beast?

Why? Well, God has actually already told us. He's already told us. He's already told Moses. In Exodus chapter 4, verse 22, we get this.

Thus says the Lord. Israel is my firstborn son. And I say to you, let my son go, that he may serve me.

If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son. The tenth plague.

The death of the firstborn son is God's justice and punishment upon Pharaoh and Egypt because they enslaved God's firstborn, Israel, his people.

[10 : 41] And this is God now bringing judgment. Now, if that makes our tummies just go kind of this morning, or maybe our seats just feel a little more uncomfortable, to end the plague, death of the son, really?

Two things to say. One, if that is how we feel, then I would suggest we haven't come to terms with the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin.

But Paul tells us in Romans, the wages of sin are death. We cannot come into the presence of a holy God and live. None of us can arrive at Buckingham Palace this week and walk into the presence of the king on our own terms.

It really doesn't work like that. And to an infinitely greater extent with this king, this holy God. But second, I also want us to see that the judgment here would actually fall on everyone without God's grace in delivering his people from it.

Just look down at verse 23, Moses, as he speaks to the elders. For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians. And when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.

[12 : 10] What is the implication here? The implication is what? No blood on the door, then you too will die. You see, Israel aren't now just saved through judgment, which they're about to be.

Judgment strikes Egypt, and through Pharaoh being brought to his knees, they are free. But they aren't just saved through judgment. Israel here are saved from judgment as well.

The wages of sin are death for Israelite and Egyptian, for Jew and Gentile, for all humanity. As God's people, they need a sacrifice.

Sins atoned for, sins covered, so they can live. 400 years in Egypt, don't we think they've adopted some of the Egyptian practices and ways?

We've seen it hinted at already. When things were going badly, they didn't turn to the Lord and come to Moses, did they? No, they appealed to Pharaoh. And actually, much later at the end of Joshua, we're going to learn that these people, their children's children, are still carrying in their pockets their little mini statues of gods from Egypt.

[13 : 28] Oh, these people need their sins covered. So we say, couldn't it be another way? Couldn't it be like the geography with the previous plagues?

In previous plagues for Israel, being in Goshen was enough. Oh, we're in Goshen. We're safe from all of that. If geography was the issue, what would he say?

He'd say, well, just don't get in your cars that night. Stay in Goshen. But no. If mere descent or ethnicity, if that was the issue, he'd say, well, as long as your birth certificate says Father Abraham on it, you're good.

Check your birth certificate. Check your passport. Check who's your father and your father's father. But that's not the issue. It's not that Israel are more deserving or better or superior or whatever way you want to put it.

No, it is merely the grace and goodness of God who sets his love on his people that they can be saved and delivered and are brought up out of Egypt. So how can they be saved?

[14 : 34] How can they be saved? Only under the blood of a lamb. Verse 13. 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. Israel, God's people, are only saved through a death in their place.

A death in their place with blood on the door of their house. When snow started falling very heavily back in January, what was the advice?

Kind of stay indoors. We had to cancel an evening service here, didn't we? Too sleepy, too cold, too dangerous. Stay in. When the bombs start dropping in the Middle East, what's the advice going to

be?

Take shelter, take safety, get underground. There you'll be safe. The only safety from judgment, it is inside, under a door sprinkled with the blood of a lamb.

[15:43] God tells them to remember this because their very lives depend on the sacrificial blood of a lamb. One without blemish, one died in their place.

Only under the blood are they safe and delivered. For over 1,400 years, God's people celebrated the Passover.

Not every year. We know in the days of King Josiah, he restores the Passover after it's been forgotten. But 1,400 years, each household, each household, would take a lamb, kill it, eat it, put the blood above the door.

Verse 13, as a sign to them that life comes through death, that their life comes through death. And 1,400 years or so later, Jesus of Nazareth walks onto the pages of history and John the Baptist cries, behold the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

If you're new to Christianity or fairly new to church, I wonder if you've ever asked yourself, why do they talk so much about blood?

[17:04] I think even up at ARI, they talk less about blood than they do here at church. Why do they sing about blood? Why did we just sing about Jesus, our Redeemer, the Lamb of God?

Why do we sing about it? Because if you want to be safe, freed, rescued from sin and death and hell, you need to be covered by the blood of a sacrificial lamb.

But not now on the door of your house, but given through the death of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God and his blood shed on a cross.

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, slain for his people. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5, Christ is our Passover lamb who has been sacrificed.

And oh, how much greater he is. You see, they offered a lamb every year. Christ died once and for all.

[18:07] Those lambs could only kind of picture and foreshadow the covering of sins. Christ fully covers and atones for all our sins. Those lambs only covered what?

A household. Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, sufficient for all who come to him. Those lambs stayed dead.

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, he lives. He is alive and risen and ruling and reigning. Yes, remember the salvation God gives through and only through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. And so friends, if you don't know him, come to him. The only shelter, rescue, deliverance from the judgment of God is under and through the blood of Christ.

One hymn writer puts it this way, there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

[19:13] So dear friends, do not delay, plunge beneath the blood of Christ and lose all your guilty stains. Let me encourage you this morning, do not delay.

Do you think on this night of Passover that there was kind of a lack of urgency in the house? Well, the dad says, I just want to wait to the end of the football. Ramesses United, I was struggling to think of other, Ramesses United playing Nile City or whatever it is.

Okay, I don't know what we call them. Oh, it's gone to extra time tonight. I think there's going to be penalties. There's a delay, they've lost power at the pitch, whatever it is. What are the family saying?

No, dad, no, kill the lamb at twilight. Put the blood on the door. Ready the meal now. Because judgment is coming.

Friend, plunge beneath the blood of Jesus. Lose all your guilty stains before God. Another hymn writer puts it this way, what can wash away our sins?

[20:15] Nothing but the blood of Jesus. For those of us who know and love the Lord Jesus, surely our response is worship. To rejoice that God, full of grace and mercy and love, would send his son, his son, to be that sacrificial lamb, the sacrificial lamb and pay fully and totally for all our sin.

In the Lord's providence, we have Exodus 12 this morning and this evening we have Matthew 27 and Joe's going to preach on the crucifixion. A Sunday to glory both morning and evening in the death of the lamb of our Lord Jesus who shed his blood for us.

Christ, the lamb without spot or stain or blemish slain for us. So yes, we're to remember our salvation for it is only through the blood of a lamb that we are saved.

Secondly then, remember the salvation God gives bringing deliverance for worship, bringing deliverance for worship. God gives instruction to Moses and Aaron and in verse 21 they tell the elders of the people.

In verse 28 the people did what the Lord commanded and in verse 29 at midnight the Lord struck. I think this morning we just need to kind of sit in some of those verses there that what it would have been like in Egypt that night.

[21 : 47] Pharaoh is brought to his knees as a great cry goes through all of Egypt from what does it say there that the highest in the land Pharaoh, his son to the lowest servant in the dungeon all, every house someone dies, the eldest son dies.

Pharaoh brought to his knees a cry goes through the land and what does he do? He summons Moses and Aaron that the men he'd previously said I don't want you in my presence again. It shows his kind of humiliation, his backtracking, the fact he's brought to his knees.

He summons them and what does he say? Go up, out, go. Previously he had stay, now he's got up, out, go.

And not just some people, again all the previous plagues, oh just the men, oh leave your flocks behind. But now you know it's all people, all flocks, go.

From slaves to Pharaoh he now says go and serve the Lord. This is the complete and unconditional surrender of Pharaoh.

[22 : 59] He cannot wave the white flag fast enough. He's tapping out the ring in the tenth round. There is only one winner. He knows the Lord is God. And actually we see that indeed all Israel, Israel, sorry all Egypt, they cannot wave the white flag fast enough.

They cannot surrender fast enough. Verse 33, what does it say? They're urgent with the people and they send them out of the land in haste. We see that the victory is kind of complete and utter.

They take all the spoils of war. Remember there's no McDonald's lay-by on the way from Ramesses to Succoth to kind of feed all the people. No, no, they take food and clothing and jewelry, all they need for the road.

And as they plunder the Egyptians, it shows that complete victory belongs to the Lord. And what a sight it must have been. Verse 37, 600,000 men on foot, women and children, livestock.

What is all of Edinburgh up and moving? What a sight. And God delivers them all. I think with some of the detail we have there about numbers, verse 37, 38, 39, we're just to see that it is all accounted for.

[24 : 22] When God rescues those he means to rescue, all come, all come, none are left behind. But what is this exodus for for God's people?

What is this freedom to bring as they're up and leave the land? Well, we're going to see more and more of this as the weeks go on, but it's hinted at here, and we do just want to see it, that the deliverance fully belongs to the Lord.

He's done it, he's rescued his people, but we just want to begin to see what's going to come into view more and more. They are delivered for worship, for worship. We see it a few places here, verse 27, they fall down and worship, but there are a few other places that point to this post-exodus life of worship to God.

Pharaoh says in verse 31, go and serve the Lord as you have said. So even Pharaoh kind of gets what Moses and Aaron have said to him, God's people are to go and serve the Lord.

We are saved to serve, saved to worship God. second, we actually see this in the instructions for the feast of the unleavened bread back in verses 19 and 20.

[25 : 41] God tells Moses, no, leaven is to be found in your house and if you eat leaven, then a person is to be cut off. You kind of think, why? Why? Well, because leaven was a reminder of the life they'd had in Egypt.

That is what they were to leave behind now. In 1 Corinthians 5, again, Paul writes this, for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I think leaven here is a reminder of what they needed to leave behind in Egypt. They were to leave it, no longer slaves to Pharaoh, but servants to God. No longer, as it were, leavened or leavened with life outside of God, but life in the place that God had given for them.

That's why they're to rush. That's why they're to hurry, get out of here. This is not where God's people belong. No, there's a promised land to come, and that's where we're meant to be. In other

words, they are saved to be sanctified, saved to be holy, leaving behind Egypt, and going to be God's people, worshipping him in his place.

Living in the Shire, as we now do, we see so much farm machinery surrounding the fields, and I have no idea what any of it's for. Thankfully, some of the kids do a project in school on farming at the moment, so I think I need to get back into primary two and learn about some of this stuff.

[27 : 18] But thankfully, and more importantly than me, the farmers know what machinery is for, right? It isn't random. It isn't random. It was built for a purpose.

They bring it out, onto the fields of whatever time of year for a reason. God saves his people through blood to worship and serve him alone.

So, friend, let us serve him alone. Let us put to bed and put to death any idols that would keep us from him. He alone rescues us, and he alone deserves all of our worship.

Remember, the salvation God gives through the blood of a lamb delivered to worship. But here's where I want to end, and here's where our passage ends.

How is it, if I can put it this way, how is it that we can remember? How is it that we can have this salvation to remember? It is because God first remembered.

[28 : 23] Because God first remembered. We remember, we rejoice, because he remembered.

Verse 40 and 42 provide a kind of brief kind of summary and kind of pause, because what has just happened is so significant.

430 years. 430 years. I have days that sometimes think, am I going to make it till bedtime? Will I get through the day?

430 years of waiting, and God delivers them. And it all happens why? Well, what does it say, verse 1 and 42?

Because it was a night of watching for the Lord. Literally, a watch night. Or we could say a night of keeping. So what did God keep?

He kept His promises. He promised to deliver His people, and He did. He promised to defeat Pharaoh, and He did.

[29 : 30] Because He kept His promises and is faithful to His word, His keeping means, verse 42, that all His people keep a night of watching to Him.

It's a beautiful play on words. The Lord kept. The Lord remembered. And so they are rescued to keep, to remember. The Lord promised.

So they now too promise to worship Him. The Lord remembered them, and they are to remember Him. That the Lord provided a lamb that we might be saved.

He kept His people, kept His word, and will do forever. And so, yes, this great salvation we have, we can remember, all because God remembered us and sent the Lord Jesus to save us.

And so all the praise and glory goes to Him. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank You so much that You are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[30 : 32] We thank You that You are a God who is faithful to Your word, faithful to Your promises, faithful to Your people. You said You would deliver Your people from Egypt. And You did.

You said that You would deliver Your people from slavery to sin. And You did. You have. You have saved us. And so we gladly rejoice and gladly remember all because You first remembered, all because You first kept, all because You first worked salvation for Your people to the glory of Your name.

And so we worship You that in and through and plunged beneath the blood of the Lamb we are safe, we are free, we are Yours.

And we give You, Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, all our praise, both now and forever, all into eternity, for the great salvation we have in You and in You alone.

And we ask all these things in Your name. Amen. Amen.