

# Bloodlines

Exodus: Revelation and Redemption

Exodus 11:1-13:22

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## *Spiritual Dementia*

This coming Saturday is World Alzheimer's Day. Alzheimer's is a form of dementia. It's a degenerative disorder that attacks the brain's nerve cells and results in the loss of memory, thinking, and language skills. It can also affect a person's behavior.<sup>1</sup> Life with Alzheimer's is increasingly lived in the present, with little awareness of the past or the future.<sup>2</sup> Listen to how one man describes how it affected his mom. "For the past four years, my mother has become increasingly locked inside herself, imprisoned... Today, she is completely shackled inside a dark mental dungeon from which she will not emerge until Jesus calls her to his side."<sup>3</sup> It's a tragic disease.

The Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research says someone develops Alzheimer's every sixty-five seconds. There are six million people affected. And it's estimated that by 2050 over sixteen million will have it. It's currently the sixth leading cause of death.<sup>4</sup>

It's not only tragic because of the loss of life. Many of you know what I'm talking about. The family members of those with Alzheimer's begin to lose their loved ones long before death. The loss of memory causes people to forget who they are and forget who their family is. This affects relationships greatly. And to add to the relational pain, there's no known cause or cure at present.

My sermon this morning is not on Alzheimer's disease. It's actually on something much more serious and potentially devastating to every Christian. It's a spiritual disease. Many people who have been freed from their sin, now live in a dark dungeon of spiritual forgetfulness. We can easily forget who we are in Christ and forget what God has done for us in Christ.

Spiritual forgetfulness is a disease that imprisons us in the present. And when we forget what God's done for us, it affects our thinking. And certainly affects our behavior. But unlike Alzheimer's, we *do* know what causes it. And there *is* a cure.

God knew that his people throughout the ages would be prone to the tragic disease of spiritual forgetfulness. And so, before God ever even redeemed Israel, he made a way for them to remember their redemption. This was through the Passover. Christ also provided the church with a way to remember redemption, before he even went to the cross. It's the Lord's Supper. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God's people are admonished to remember what God has done for them so that they can live faithfully in the present with a hope toward the future.

Our passage today describes two main events. The tenth plague and the exodus. The tenth plague is the death of the firstborn son. And the exodus records Israel being brought out of Egypt by God's mighty hand.

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<sup>1</sup> [9 Things You Should Know About Alzheimer's Disease](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Second Forgetting: Remembering the Power of the Gospel During Alzheimer's Disease](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Staring at Dementia, Fighting for Joy](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Statistics](#)

This week in our preaching team, Pastor Daniel made a great observation. The tenth plague is covered in chapter 11 and the first part of chapter 12. But the narrative is interrupted by a large set of instructions for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The exodus is covered in the last part of chapter 12 and the end of chapter 13. But it too is interrupted by a large set of instructions for the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the redemption of the first born in Israel.

This structure reveals the emphasis of the text. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were instituted to help God's people *remember* their redemption. Although redemption from Egypt is the climax of the plagues, and the most important part of this text, the emphasis on remembering shows us the application of this text.

So here's my sermon in a sentence. It's quite simple. We must remember our redemption.

But before we remember, we need to know exactly what it is we're called to remember. So to divide our time this morning, we're going to begin with the redemption of God's people from Egypt. Then we're going to look at the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to see what we can learn about remembering.

## REDEMPTION

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Let's begin. What does this passage teach us about redemption? God's wrath is satisfied and his people saved only through the blood of a substitute.

Not everyone will be saved. God makes a distinction between his people and those who are not his people. This is drawn out clearly in chapters 11 and 12.

Like I said earlier, chapter 11 gives us a prediction of the exodus and the tenth plague. I don't have time to cover it this morning in detail. So, I want to get to the heart of chapter 11 as quickly as possible. There's a clear structure to this chapter. In the first part of the chapter, we're given the promise of the exodus. Pharaoh will finally let them go. In fact, he will *make* them go (11:1-3). This promise is repeated in the last part of the chapter (11:8-10). And in the middle, we're told *why* he'll run them out of Egypt (11:4-7).

### Exodus 11:4-7<sup>5</sup>

*<sup>4</sup>So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, <sup>5</sup>and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. <sup>6</sup>There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. <sup>7</sup>But 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.*

The reason Pharaoh will drive Israel out of Egypt is because God will strike down the firstborn son in every house in Egypt, but will spare the firstborn in Israel. There will be a distinction that is made.

I know most of you are familiar with the tenth plague. But sometimes familiarity clouds our vision from just how serious this plague was. We've already said how difficult it is to lose your parents to dementia. But there's *nothing worse* than losing one of your children! That's what's happening here. Think about it as if it happened today.

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<sup>5</sup> Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

What if my wife woke up in the middle of the night to discover I was dead beside her? She might think I had a heart attack. But then she discovers that Abe is also dead in his bed. Can you imagine the horror!? But not only that, our next-door neighbor Candace comes over to tell us that Landon is dead too. Then Stacey comes over to tell us Reece is dead. Before long, we discover that the whole block has lights on and the sirens are screaming in the neighborhood. Then someone turns on the television and discovers this is not just happening on Armour street. There's at least one person dead in almost every house in the entire city!

That's what's about to happen in Egypt. That's why Pharaoh will drive the Israelites out of Egypt. He's had enough of the mighty hand of Yahweh.

But the remarkable thing is nobody will be dead among the Israelites, not even a cow. There will be wailing in Egypt like never before. But not even a dog will be barking in Goshen. And what's the reason for this? So everyone will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel (v. 7). We saw that distinction in the first nine plagues. But the distinction is all the clearer in the tenth plague.

What's the distinction? Or in other words, on what basis will God make a distinction between his people and those who are not his people? It's through blood. God draws a line between his people and his enemies with blood. This point is made in chapter 12, verses 1-14. Look at verses 12-13.

### **Exodus 12:12-13**

*<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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.*

So, the LORD will *pass through* Egypt in judgment. But he'll *pass over* the Israelites because of the blood.

What's so significant about this blood? What do we learn about redemption through the blood? I already said it, but I'll say it again. God's wrath is satisfied and his people are saved only through the blood of a substitute.<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 12 teaches us a really important lesson. A lesson that's a matter of life and death. Not only life and death now, but a matter of *eternal* life and *eternal* death.

You see, it was not only Pharaoh and the Egyptians who deserved death for their sin; the Israelites did too! Otherwise they wouldn't have needed blood. And here's the thing...so do we. All of us are sinners. And the Bible says, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). And the death we deserve is not just physical death, like the horrible death of the firstborn sons I described earlier. We deserve eternal spiritual death—a separation from God. There's nobody who's ever lived or who will ever live that can stand before God, the holy righteous judge, without protection, without a covering.<sup>7</sup> But thankfully God has provided protection and a covering for his people.

God's wrath against our sin can only be satisfied through death. But God makes a way for his wrath to be satisfied through a *substitutionary* death. He provides a substitute to die in the place of sinners.

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<sup>6</sup> Drawn from: Alec Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*. The Bible Speaks Today

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

We see this in the Passover. God provides Israel a substitutionary lamb (v. 4). This lamb had to be perfect, without blemish (v. 5). That was to symbolize the need for an innocent death in place of guilty sinners. Each household had to take this spotless lamb and kill it (v. 6). Then they had to take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts of their houses (v. 7). The blood symbolized death. But it also symbolized Israel's faith. If they would take this blood and put it on their doors, that would show they believed God. If they believed his promise, he would pass over them.<sup>8</sup>

And this is what Israel did. They believed God. They placed the blood on their doors. The blood of a substitute. And although they may not have understood all of this, they acted in faith. God's wrath was satisfied and they were saved from death.

This is still the way that God's wrath is satisfied and his people are saved. But it's no longer through an animal. The death of the Passover lamb was temporary. It was never meant to be permanent. It was meant to point to the ultimate and eternal Lamb who would die once and for all (Heb. 10).

Paul says that Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7). Jesus was the spotless Lamb. He was perfect and innocent, without sin. He didn't deserve death. But he defeated death by dying for us on the cross. His death satisfied God's wrath and saved his people. This is how Paul puts it in Romans 3:23-25: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

God gave his only Son as a substitute so his wrath can be satisfied (or propitiated) and we can be saved from the death we deserve. Not everyone is saved. Only those who receive this good news by faith.

As I said earlier, the main application of Exodus 12 is to remember our redemption. But before you can remember redemption, you have to be redeemed. So, if you're here this morning, and you've not yet placed your trust in the blood of Jesus to forgive you from your sin and save you from eternal death then today is the day. Without the covering of Jesus' blood, you have no chance of standing in God's judgment. When he "passes through" in judgment, you'll experience a horror much worse than Egypt experienced. *But* if you trust in the death of the substitutionary Lamb—Jesus—God will pass over you.

## REMEMBER

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Let's turn our attention now to the main application of this text. We're called to remember our redemption.

Like I said earlier, in the middle of the redemption event, in the middle of the tenth plague and the exodus, God inserts a repeated call to remember the redemption. He does this by setting up the perpetual celebration of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover commemorates their salvation from the tenth plague. The Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates their exodus from Egypt.

We have all kinds of days and months like this in America. Days and seasons we set aside to remember. We have Memorial Day. A day to remember the death of our loved ones and specifically the death of soldiers who have fought for our freedom. We have the Fourth of July to remember

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<sup>8</sup> Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Genesis, Exodus*: Cornerstone Biblical Commentary

our independence. Just this week we were called to remember 9/11. I could go on, but you get the point.

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were like Memorial Day. They were ordinances given to Israel to observe throughout their history to remember this most important event. An event that defined them as a people. And it was an event that would define their children and their children's children. Look at chapter 12, verses 24-27.

### **Exodus 12:24-27**

<sup>24</sup>“You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. <sup>25</sup>And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup>And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ <sup>27</sup>you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

God says something similar about the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

### **Exodus 13:3-9**

<sup>3</sup>Then Moses said to the people, “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. No leavened bread shall be eaten. <sup>4</sup>Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. <sup>5</sup>And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. <sup>6</sup>Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. <sup>8</sup>You shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ <sup>9</sup>And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.”

So, the call to remember redemption is clear and repeated here. But what exactly were the Israelites to remember? And what are we to remember? I think it's something like this. God's ordinances remind us that who we are is based primarily on what God has done.

The first thing the Passover Feast reminds us of is what God has done for us. As we continue in the book of Exodus we're going to come to Mt. Sinai. And on Mt. Sinai, God's redeemed people are given the Law. The Law teaches them how to live as God's people. But the temptation throughout all generations and in all religions is to believe that our works save us. Many believe that what we do is what earns us God's favor. But that's not the way it works in God's economy. The main thing is what God's done for us, not what we do for God.

Sure, God gives his people laws and ethics and wisdom for how to live. But we are not saved by works. What we do always flows out of what God has previously done for us. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). This is not only true for us as Christians. It was true for the Israelites as well.

Think about the way the Ten Commandments start out. They don't start out with the first commandment. They start out with a statement of what God has done. They say, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2-4). The Law doesn't start with law. It starts with gospel. It begins

with what God has done before it moves on to what we're to do. There's nothing much more important to remember than this.

So why remember the Passover? We're told in chapter 12, verses 26-27. "And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'"

And why observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread? We're told in chapter 13, verse 8. "You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'"

Israel was to observe these ordinances to remember what God did for them. That's first. The second thing they're to remember is who they are. In fact, who they are is based on what God has done. God made a distinction between Israel and Egypt by bloodlines. They were set apart. The feasts taught them they uniquely belonged to God.

This is drawn out in the instructions given to Israel about who can observe the Passover Feast in all generations. Look at chapter 12, verses 43-45: "And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it.'"

The Passover was something that was uniquely for the people of God. They were set apart for him. This is drawn out in the Feast of Unleavened Bread too. Originally the reason their bread had to be unleavened was simply because they had to leave Egypt in haste. But eventually leaven came to represent evil (cf. 1 Cor. 5). And the evil has to be purged from the community of God. God's people are set apart for him.<sup>9</sup>

But did you notice something in the verses we just read. A foreigner could not participate in the celebration. *Unless* the foreigner was first circumcised. You see this celebration was *only* for the covenant people of God. It was *only* for those God saved. But if a person converted. And if that person was circumcised, which was a mark of the covenant, they too could participate in the celebration.

The Passover Feast wasn't only for those who originally came out of Egypt. It was also for their children, and their children's children. *And* for any who were incorporated into the people of God.

We see this same principle at work in the New Testament. The Lord's Supper has transformed the Passover Feast. The Lord's Supper now commemorates and memorializes the death of *the* Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. In the Lord's Supper, we remember what God has done for us in Christ. Through his broken body and shed blood, we are saved from God's wrath. It celebrates what God has done for his people. And it celebrates who we are in Christ.

The Lord's Supper is only for those who belong to God through faith in Christ. But it's available to *anyone* who comes into relationship with God through the blood of the new covenant. It's available for *all* who believe, without distinction.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary

There is a disease of forgetfulness that can plague and imprison the people of God. When we forget what God has done for us in the past, we forget who we are. And when we forget who we are, it affects the way we live in the present.

We may be tempted into thinking that who we are is based on what we do, but that will lead us to pride or despair. When we remember that who we are is based on what God has done, that will lead us to bow our heads and worship God, like the Israelites, with our lips and with our lives.

Thank God that he has provided a cure for spiritual forgetfulness. He has given us the means of grace. We can read his Word daily and be reminded. We should gather together regularly with God's people to hear God's Word. We should regularly observe the Lord's Supper to remember.

If we neglect the means of grace, you can be sure that we will forget. But we don't have to forget. Every Lord's Day is Memorial Day in the church. As we worship God, we remember what God has done for us. We remember our redemption.