

The Night Of Redemption

Exodus 12

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Exodus 12 is one of the most important of all the night scenes of the Bible. It is second only to Luke 2, when Jesus was born on the night the angels sang to the shepherds, or to Matthew 26, when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane at night, when He sweat great drops of blood.

Exodus 12 was a night when God delivered His people from their bondage and slavery in Egypt. Its scene is redemption; we call it the Passover. To this day, the Jews continue to celebrate the feast of Passover.

Beginning in Exodus 12:1, it says, “Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt...”—that’s the setting—“...saying, ‘This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel saying....’” This is the Lord telling Moses what to tell God’s people. Then we have the institution of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and then the Exodus takes place.

What God tells Moses to speak to the congregation is, “On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.” That’s one family for one household. “And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year.” So this lamb would be what’s called “a yearling” or a little lamb. “You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month.”

“Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it...”—notice that—“...at twilight.” This is our first reference to night. “And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste.”

“It is the Lord’s Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.”

Notice that every time he says “Lord,” it is in all capital letters. So He is Jehovah or Yahweh.

Continuing, “Now 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 the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I

strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.”

Then starting again at verse 29, “And it came to pass...”—this is the actual Passover—“...at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.”

Next we read verse 42: “It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.”

This Passover is taking place in Egypt, and let me give you the background and setting. It started way back when Joseph was sold by his brothers to the merchants and was taken into Egypt. Then through various circumstances, he was exalted to second only to Pharaoh. So in that sense, he was the prince of Egypt. As a result of a famine in Israel, Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt to buy grain, and there they encountered their brother, Joseph. Due to other circumstances, Joseph’s family, including 70 souls, were again brought to Egypt from Israel by Joseph’s decree. They are taken care of there and preserved, so they grew into a mighty nation.

But the Egyptians began to be concerned; they were worried that the Jews would outnumber them and grow too large. So the Pharaoh at that time wrote an edict that said that every male baby born in the homes of the Jews would be thrown into the Nile River. It was during this time that Moses was born and was drawn out of the Nile in a basket. Moses then became the deliverer. Moses told the children of Israel that God had sent him to deliver them, but they rejected him. Then through a series of nine plagues leading up to the Passover, God brought frogs, gnats, flies, death of their livestock, boils, hail, locusts, a night of darkness and the Nile turning to blood. God was judging the gods of Egypt through these plagues.

One great, last, final judgment would come upon Egypt, which would be the death angel or the destroyer passing through the land, and the firstborn of each Egyptian home would die. But where the blood was applied to the homes of the Hebrews, God would pass over that home. That’s where we get the name Passover. God would not destroy the firstborn in that home.

The Passover is perhaps the clearest picture or type—putting it in a theological term—in the Old Testament of redemption through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. If I were to summarize the story of the Passover, it is a picture or a type, a “tupos,” of the blood of Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross, so that our sins can be forgiven. Jesus took our punishment, our death and God’s wrath that we deserved, so that God’s judgment would pass over those who put their faith, their trust and their belief in Jesus Christ.

Let me explain what I mean by a “type.” This passage in Exodus is called a “symbol” or “token.” Many times in the Old Testament we have stories or narratives—I believe they are true and historically accurate and happened just as they said in the Bible—that have a significant spiritual picture in them of something that is yet to be fulfilled in the New Testament. The Old Testament picture is what is fulfilled in reality in the New Testament, which is called the “antitype,” and it is heightening or is the essence of that story, picture or type, just as Melchizedek is a picture or type of Christ.

I want to give you a principle to use in interpreting types in the Bible that is important. We can only be sure that an Old Testament is a type when the New Testament designates it as such. We can't just read spiritual meaning or typology into a story willy-nilly that the Spirit of God doesn't confirm in the New Testament. If we do that, we have no real authority for our interpretation.

I hear a lot of preaching today where this is a type and that is a type, but there is not always a clear explanation in the New Testament that the episode, story or thing is a type of Christ or is fulfilled in the New Testament. So what we need is New Testament teaching to confirm that the Old Testament story has spiritual application.

For that, let me give you, for starters, 1 Corinthians 5:7, where Paul says, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” So Jesus Christ died at Passover; He was the Paschal Lamb. He was “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” And that is pictured in this marvelous story that took place during this night of deliverance and redemption.

I now want to focus on four lessons of deliverance and redemption from this story of the night scene of the Passover. Lesson number one is a lesson on sin, or you might want to say, specifically, the sinfulness of sin. God takes sin very seriously.

One of the problems in the church today is that we have a low view of God, and we have a low view of sin. We really don't see that sin is quite sinful. The reason why God will judge sin is because God is holy and God is righteous. We like to focus on God's love and God's mercy. It's right to do that, but even God, in His love and mercy and grace, cannot avoid punishing sin. To maintain His righteousness and His holiness, God must—it's absolutely necessary—judge sin.

It says in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” Notice in verse 12 of our text that it says, “I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.” So we are deceived if we think we can sin and get away with it, or we can sin and God won't judge us or we can sin and won't have to answer to God, that God's righteousness and holiness will not take justice into account and judge sin.

God judges the sin of Egypt, in verse 12. He says, “Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.” There was a whole plethora of false gods in the Egyptian culture; they worshipped everything. They also worshipped the things that God judged: the frogs, the Nile, the sun—God darkened the sun. He was judging their gods. They had false gods that they worshipped,

so all the plagues God brought were judgements of their false gods.

After these nine plagues, Pharaoh still had hardened his heart. After each one of the plagues leading up to the Passover, Pharaoh had hardened his heart. And then there is kind of a mysterious statement that says that “The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh.” The understanding in the Hebrew is that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and God allowed Him to do that. So that’s the sense in which God hardened Pharaoh’s heart; he hardened his own heart, and God released him and allowed him to do that. God didn’t purposely hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh had free will to harden his own heart.

So there are several reasons why God brought judgment: false gods, worshipping gods of their own hands, the hardened heart of Pharaoh and the death of the Hebrew babies brought God’s retribution. The Bible says, “Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap.”

So if you think, That’s pretty radical; God killed the firstborn in Egypt! Well, what did they do? Can you imagine having a newborn baby ripped out of your arms and thrown into a river and drowned?! How heartbreaking and how horrible that would be! It’s unimaginable.

Egypt had done that to Israel; now God did that to Egypt. God took their firstborn, which God says represents our first birth or our old, sinful life. God brought judgment on our old life. That’s why you have to be born again, and the Passover is the beginning of a new month, the beginning of a new life through the blood of the Lamb. So God would judge Egypt.

The point I want to make is that the Hebrews were also sinners, as they huddled in their homes. In all our study of the book of Exodus and of the Passover, we say, “Yeah, those Egyptians are all messed up! Yeah, they deserved to be judged! Yeah, judge ‘em, God!” Well, what about the Hebrews? The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” Romans 3:23. The Bible also says, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” So if you’re condemning the Egyptians and the Hebrews, welcome to the club; “All have sinned.” Sin is missing the mark. Sin is not measuring up to God’s standards. We all have sinned.

Notice verse 23 of our text: “For the Lord will...not allow the destroyer to come into your...”—emphasis on “your”—“...houses to strike you.” It’s implied—it’s not explicit—but the implication is that if it weren’t for the blood applied to their homes, their firstborns would have died, as well. If they hadn’t believed God’s promise that he would pass over if they had stayed hidden in their homes where the blood had been applied, then they would also have experienced this judgment of God. So the Hebrews were not exempt.

A lot of people think they are exempt from the judgment of God, because of their race. “Well, we’re Hebrews; God won’t judge us.” Don’t be deceived. Some people think they’re exempt from the judgment of God because of their religion; “I’m this” or “that” or “I’m a good person.” Some people think they’re exempt from the judgment of God because of their morality. One of the most common answers I get to “Will you go to heaven?” is “Yes; I’m a good person.” They don’t understand the sinfulness of sin. They don’t understand that “All have sinned” and all

have fallen short. "There is none righteous, no, not one." God demands perfection of us, but we've all missed the mark.

When you look at the Hebrews, when Moses first came to them as God's prophet with God's word, they rejected him. And even when God began to bring the plagues on Egypt, and the Egyptians made the Hebrews' service even more difficult, the Hebrews got angry at Moses, God's servant, and rejected God's word and wanted Moses to leave them alone. God had a plan to redeem them, but they rejected His word.

The Hebrews were also guilty of idolatry, believe it or not. Living in Egypt, they adopted some of the gods that the Egyptians worshipped. In Joshua 24:14, after the Hebrews had entered into the Promised Land, Joshua told them to "put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt." They were walking through the Red Sea with these gods in their hands. Now it's time to get rid of those gods. So they were sinners, as well.

Like all humanity, they were sinners by nature, because of the Fall. It doesn't matter what race, what religion, what ethnic background; "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The tenth plague was a sign of God's judgment against all humanity, because of the Fall in the Garden of Eden or under the judgment of God.

In Romans 3:19, Paul says, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world..."—catch that—"...may become guilty before God." So the religious person, the moral person, the pagan, the heathen, the ungodly—all are under the judgment of God. The whole world is guilty.

You say, "Well, Pastor, does that mean there is no hope? There is no promise of deliverance?" The answer is, "Yes, there is hope; God promised a deliverer." So the first thing we learn from God is our need for a deliverer.

The second lesson we learn is the lesson on substitution. This is one of the important doctrines of the Bible. The death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was a substitutionary death; He died in our place. In verse 3, there is the reference to "a lamb" twice; in verse 4, there is the reference to "the lamb" twice; and in verse 5, there is a reference to "your lamb." I want you to see this progression: it goes from "a lamb" to "the lamb" to "your lamb." The lamb is chosen, it has to be spotless, the lamb has to be slain, its blood has to be applied to the house and then you have to huddle in the house under the blood to be spared the judgment or wrath of God. That chosen lamb is Jesus Christ. And that lamb had to be a yearling, a male lamb less than a year old.

Those little lambs are so cute. When they get old, they get dirty and ugly and weird. Give me a little lamb. They kept it in their house. Some say this is a picture of Jesus being tested for His 33 years.

Then the father would take the lamb and slit its throat, and its red blood would pour out over that precious, little lamb. What a harsh thing that must have been to watch. "Why, Daddy? Why?" But the firstborn in the household could be told by its father, "That lamb died for you!

That lamb took your place! That lamb died in your stead!" It's a picture of substitutionary death.

So He was a chosen lamb; Jesus was chosen before the foundation of the world. He is the spotless Lamb; Jesus was born of a virgin and had no inherited defect. He lived a sinless life.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that Jesus Christ was a sinner, that He sinned, that He disobeyed God or that He inherited a sin-nature from Adam. He was born of a virgin, came from heaven, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death and then He rose physically and bodily from the dead. That's the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are central to the Christian faith. Take out any one of those points, and you do not have Biblical Christianity. Jesus had to be the sacrificial Lamb.

1 Peter 1:18-19 is another reference to this. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from you fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." So God required a lamb and God provided a Lamb.

An example of this is when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they tried to cover their sin themselves—man's attempt to cover sin—with fig leaves. It didn't work too well. Fig leaves are so itchy. Not a very good fashion statement either. So God had to slay an animal; blood had to be shed. God took the skin of an animal. Bible students believe—and I concur—that it was a lamb. It doesn't say that, but maybe it was a lamb. Again, this was a picture of the Lamb of God who would die for our sins, to cover Adam and Eve's sin or nakedness. That was one lamb for one sin.

Then in Exodus 12, during the Passover, we have one lamb for a household. If the family was too small, they could join with another family under one roof. So you had one lamb for a person, one lamb for a family.

Then God established Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. There was one lamb offered, by the priest, who sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat in the Holy Place for the sins of the whole nation.

So we start with one lamb per person, one lamb per family and one lamb for the whole nation. Then in the New Testament, we see John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Jesus is coming to be baptized, and John says, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Wow! Isn't that marvelous?! One holy Lamb.

Why was the blood of Jesus Christ so valuable? Because it was the blood of God. He was the incarnate Son of God. He was the sinless Son of God in human flesh. Jesus' blood had infinite value and power to deliver us from sin and to redeem us unto God to be His own, peculiar, special people. In the Day of Atonement, one lamb was slain, but John the Baptist made it clear that Jesus was that Lamb slain for the sins of the whole world.

The consistent message of the Bible is, if you want to meet God, you must meet God on the

basis of the blood of the Lamb. We used to sing the song, "If you want to get to heaven, you can't go around the Cross." I like that. There's only one place to meet God, and that's on the hill of Calvary, where the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for you and for me.

In Genesis 22, we have another type or picture of the Cross when Abraham was told by God, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering." There are two first-time mentions in this verse: "only son" and "love." It is the first place the word "love" appears in the Bible. It was in the context of a father giving his son as a sacrifice. They got the wood and had the fire and the knife. And Mount Moriah happened to be the same mountain that Jesus died on, by the way. Then Isaac asked his father, "Where is the lamb?"

That's the important issue. Not "I go to church. I have been baptized. I am a good person." The question is, "Where is the Lamb?" Isaac knew that God required blood to be shed. He knew that God required a lamb to die.

So "Where is the Lamb?" is the right question. If you say, "Well, I'm a good person" or "I go to church" or "I've been baptized" or "I've been confirmed" or "I'm a Baptist" or "I'm a Presbyterian" or "I'm a Pentecostal" or "I go to Revival Christian Fellowship" or whatever, God's going to ask, "Where is the Lamb? Where is the blood?" There is only one person qualified to die for us, and that's Jesus Christ. It was the substitutionary death of Christ.

Jonathan Edwards, the great American theologian, said, "Christ and His redemption are the subjects of the whole Word of God." William Evans said, "Cut the Bible anywhere and it bleeds; it's red with redemptive truth."

Modern Christianity doesn't like the blood; it's too gory, too primitive, too hostile—the concept of a blood sacrifice. We want to take blood songs out of our hymnals and blood sermons out of our pulpits. But the Bible is "red with redemptive truth." It's all about the blood. And as I was tracing this through the Bible, it was overwhelming to see all the references to the blood of our redemption and salvation.

A lesson on the sinfulness of sin, that God is holy and righteous and will judge sin, is a lesson on the substitute that God required and God provided. So Jesus, who was crucified at Passover, became our substitute.

Then, thirdly, it's a lesson on salvation. The story of the Passover, that took place that night, is a story about God's redemptive salvation. God not only required a lamb, He required a slain or sacrificed lamb. They couldn't just hold the little lamb, pet the little lamb and have the little lamb in their house; the lamb had to be slain and die. Notice verse 6: they "shall kill it."

So you choose the lamb, a lamb without blemish and spot, which pictures Christ, and then you slay that lamb. Wow! That would be heavy to see. In that time, there would be thousands of lambs slain at Passover and when Christ died. But He was the one true Lamb who was slain for our sin.

I want you to notice the blood in this passage. It is mentioned six times. In verse 7, we have a reference to blood; in verse 13, it is mentioned twice; in verse 22, it is mentioned twice; and in verse 23, it is mentioned once. In verse 23, it says, "When He sees the blood..." It's not when He sees your good works or your good deeds but "when He sees the blood...the Lord will pass over."

Leviticus 17:14 says, "The life of all flesh is its blood." Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin. It's significant that Jesus died, but He died a very bloody, violent, sacrificial death.

I understand that when Steven Spielberg was producing the animated movie The Prince of Egypt on the life of Moses, in the original script, when he came to the story of the Passover, he had it worded in the movie, "I will see the mark and I will pass over." He had hired some religious leaders as consultants, and they said, "No, you can't use the word 'mark.' You must say 'blood.'" So Spielberg changed the script to say, "I will see the blood and I will pass over."

So modern minds want to reject the blood, but those who know the Scriptures, know the Bible, realize there is no substitute for the blood of Jesus Christ. It can't be substituted by good works or righteous deeds or living a moral life. You must be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Next I want to give you some theological truths before I get to the fourth lesson. Notice verse 13. It says, "The blood shall be a sign for you..."—there's our type or our picture—"...on the houses where you are." Then notice He says, "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt."

There are two things there. First, the Hebrews will see the blood, and it would be a token or sign. The second thing is that God Himself would see the blood, and it would be a confirmation that someone has died, someone has paid the price—the blood has been shed—and He would pass over them. The debt has been satisfied.

These are two theological truths that are important. When the Hebrews looked at the doorposts and saw the blood, they knew that they were forgiven. This is what's called "expiation." They were atoned for. They were justified. That is the death of Christ for us; we are forgiven. When we look at the Cross, when we hold the Communion cup in our hand, when we break the bread and eat together, we remember that my sins were forgiven. This is why Communion is such an important institution of the church; remembering what Christ said. He wants us to remember His body and His blood. So when you look at the Cross, it says that Jesus died to forgive me.

But God also looked at the blood. And when God looks at the blood, He is propitiated. This is the doctrine of propitiation. In other words, the death of Christ on the Cross satisfied the demand of a holy, righteous judge—God Himself is satisfied.

So the Cross not only goes out to forgive sinners; the Cross is actually to satisfy God. The penalty has been paid. Justice has been served. In my experience of salvation, I have been

justified, declared righteous before a holy God. And God is just in justifying me, because the penalty has been paid. He didn't just say, "I forgive you. I let you go."

We sometimes focus on the mercy of God and the grace of God. That's all fine and dandy, but what about the justice, the righteousness and the wrath of God? How do you satisfy that? There is only one way: propitiation. Someone must pay the penalty. If I'm to go free, someone must take my place. Someone must die in my stead. So Jesus, in His love, comes to take my place to satisfy the demands of a holy, righteous God.

Let me give you three New Testament verses about this. Romans 5:9 says, "Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." 1 John 1:7 says, "The blood of Jesus Christ...cleanses us from all sin." And Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

I want to make an important point here. We are not saved by Christ's example or teaching. We are saved by Christ's sacrificial, substitutionary death on the Cross.

Again, a lot of times in our modern church today, we want to talk all about following Christ's example and His teaching. Living like Jesus. And we should. But what good is that if we haven't come as sinners and been born again by the blood of Jesus Christ? Jesus' death—and only His death and His blood—can redeem us from our sin and bondage. So you're not saved by Christ's life or example; you're saved by His death. He was actually born in order that He would die. He wasn't born to teach or born to show us; He was actually born to give His blood on the Cross. He is the Lamb of God. We need to remember that as we look at this Passover story.

Fourthly, this is a lesson on service. The Hebrews were to eat the bread unleavened, which speaks of holiness. Leaven is a symbol for sin. They were to eat the lamb roasted and not boiled, and entirely eat it that night. So once we are redeemed, the symbolism is that we are to eat of Christ.

This is a prefigure or type of our Communion. The bread and the cup symbolize Christ's body and blood. Taking Communion physically is only a picture or type of what we do by faith.

And the night those Israelites huddled in their homes through the darkness of night, they heard the cries of the Egyptians. There's something about late at night when there is a calm and stillness and more moisture in the air, you can hear sounds come from a long distance. It's piercing. Imagine the wailing and the crying from the homes of the Egyptians. But not in the Hebrews' homes; they rested assured, because the blood was on their house. God's promises are sure; He will preserve us. So they were saved by grace, through faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast," Ephesians 2:8-9.

When they put the blood on their houses, it wasn't a work; it was an act of faith. When they rested in their homes that night, that was an act of faith.

Then Ephesians 2:10 goes on to say, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." The Greek word is "poiéma," which means "a work of art, something made, a masterpiece."

So God saves us and redeems us from our bondage, from our slavery to sin, by the blood of Jesus Christ and sets us free to walk in His ways.

This is in the story in verse 11. You eat the bread with girded loins, your shoes on your feet, "your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover." This speaks of our ongoing service.

Why does God save us? To serve Him. Have your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand. So be ready to go, living in holiness and true godliness, serving the Lord as His workmanship, for we are His poiéma, His work of art.

Thank God for the Lamb, Jesus Christ.