

God Redeems His People

Exodus 11:1-12:14; 12:29-42

Fall Old Testament Sermon Series on Exodus

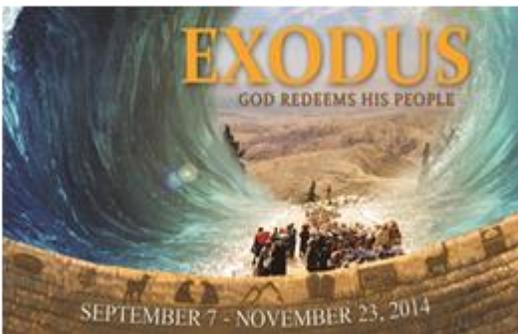
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

October 5, 2014

TEXTS: Exodus 11:1-12:14; 12:29-42

This morning as we continue in our Exodus series, we have the great and sacred privilege of seeing the Person and work of our Lord Jesus prefigured before us in our Scripture text. We see



redemption accomplished. God instructs His people to place the blood of the Passover lamb over the doorposts of their homes, and He sweeps through the land with a climactic plague of judgment. Wherever He sees the blood of the lamb, He passes over and there is salvation in that home. As we follow this passage of Scripture, we will lead to the celebration of this memorial, the remembrance of Christ Himself, our Passover Lamb in

whose blood we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. This narrative is compelling; it is a great hinge moment in all of Scripture, and we want to pick up the tension from last Sunday when Moses stood before the pharaoh's court with the climactic ninth plague. In this setting, Pharaoh had burst out in anger saying that he would kill Moses the next time he sees him. We see Pharaoh, instead of repenting, reverting back to the very beginning of his anger and frustration and rage against the Israelites. He even attempts kill Moses at the very beginning of Exodus.

This morning, we look at this opening scene. We want to follow the movement from this final confrontation in the court to the slowing down of time as God instructs His people the price of redemption and leads to this moment of God's great victory of redemption. Let's look together at this final scene. Moses is standing before Pharaoh. Pharaoh had just threatened to take his life, and in the hearing of Pharaoh, God speaks again. First He speaks privately to Moses in Exodus 11:1. He says:

"I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely."

He will not just grant you permission, but he will drive you forth from Egypt. God tells Moses to instruct the people that they are to ask for articles of silver and gold. Later on we read they

asked for clothing as well. This recalls the promise given to Abram in Genesis 15:13-14:

“Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

Already in Genesis 15, the Lord had promised this element. In the initial call of Moses in Exodus 3:21-22, the Lord had told him:

“And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing.”

Even in the initial confrontation with Pharaoh, it is promised that he will be giving articles of the wealth of Egypt to Israel. This is really unusual! It is one thing that he would let them go; it's another that he would compel them to leave; it's yet another thing that he would fill their bank accounts as they leave. In the commentary tradition, there are three reasons given for this, and I think each of them is quite profound. The **first** reason in the commentary tradition is that this is viewed as compensation for 400 years of service in slavery without pay. I think that's a beautiful a reading of this, that God's people are actually given the compensation that they lacked. A **second** reason given is that sometimes we wonder where the material comes from for the construction of the sanctuary and the tabernacle and the high priest vestments. They are, in fact, this material that is requested from the Egyptians. A **third** reason given, and this is something we will see in a few weeks, is that part of Israel's unique laws is that when someone leaves service to you, you do not send them forth empty-handed, in imitation of this very act. Part of the distinctiveness of Israel is to remember all of these things that God has done. In one sense, it is sort of like an ancient golden parachute, you leave the time of slavery and Egypt pours out her wealth. Notice that all they have to do is ask, and the people give willingly. We read in Exodus 11:3 that the Lord is at work:

“The LORD made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.”

We see Pharaoh increasingly isolated from his own people, counselors, and priests. Sin, when it hardens us, is isolating in its trajectory. It always is, and it will leave you increasingly alone.

The final challenge of the living God to Pharaoh begins in Exodus 11:4. This is what the Lord then announces to pharaoh:

“About midnight I will go throughout Egypt.”

In Exodus 11:5, God announces a devastating final judgment:

“Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well.”

Notice that there is no protection from this judgment because of social class. He makes it explicit that it will be death of the firstborn from the pharaoh who sits on the throne to the slave girl who is seated behind her mill. No one is exempt from this judgment. In the American Civil War, one of the ironies of the Civil War was that sometimes wealthy people would pay lower-class sons to serve in the place of their sons who would then be exempt from the conflict. In this plague in of Egypt, there is no exemption due to social status. It is directed towards Pharaoh. Notice that it is a measured judgment; it is just the firstborn. But, like all of God's wrath, it is designed to bring about repentance for those who would believe and judgment upon those whose hearts are hard. This is the original challenge of God to Pharaoh in Exodus 4:23:

“I told you, ‘Let My son go, so he may worship Me.’ But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.”

In the Bible, the punishment fits the crime. God is not capricious; His judgment is not without limit or restraint. In Exodus 11:6, the Lord promises:

“There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt--worse than there has ever been or ever will be again.”

The Hebrew text of Exodus 11:6 reads in such a way that clearly recalls the crying out of the Israelites in the earlier chapters, so the punishment fits the crime, and while there is no exemption for social status, every home is afflicted. God expresses that not even a dog will bark or snarl at the Israelites, Exodus 11:7:

“But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal. Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.”

I love this poetic description of God's total protection of His people. When we are in Greece, we like to stay at a place where we have to walk to where the restaurants are. On the way to the restaurants, there is one home that has a large, scary, Greek dog. As we are about to pass by, I think, “I know the dog is going to run out and bark. I know this is coming; I can handle it.” Still, as we get close, even though the dog is behind a stone wall, behind an iron gate, and it can't get to us, when this dog reaches out and growls at us, we still feel the terror of it. I've determined that next time, I'm going to walk right by it. In this passage, not even a dog growls at God's people, and we see in this climactic plague the extent of the distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. Even as this is playing out in its first setting, the people of Israel have to be wondering why, why does God make such a distinction; the Egyptians must also wonder why does God make such a distinction.

Moses finishes this climactic announcement to Pharaoh in Exodus 11:8 by saying:

“All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will leave.”

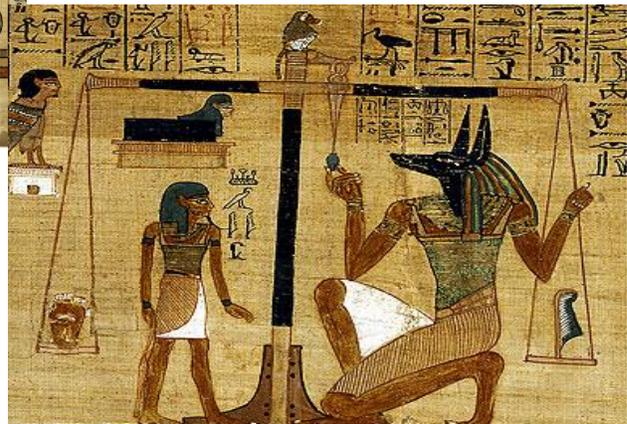
The Lord says to Moses yet a final time in Exodus 11:9:

“Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you--so that My wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.”

Pharaoh's heart will be hardened. We explored this last Sunday in some depth, and it is wonderful that our God speaks and communicates and reveals Himself to us in this image of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is an image of ultimate judgment against Pharaoh. This is the picture I showed last week of the climactic scene of the Egyptians passing through into eternal life. How do you make it into eternal life for an Egyptian? You come before the pantheon of the god seated above; you come at the center of



this image with Thoth, the god of scribes, with a scribal pallet of the god Ammit ready to devour on one side. As you zoom in closer, you see that image of judgment. The process of mummification takes out all of the major organs except for the heart. The first one to be taken out is the brain, but they left the heart so that the



heart would be placed on the scales of judgment at the end. The feather of truth and righteousness on the one side, and the heart on the other. If the heart is heavier than the feather of righteousness, the person is condemned and judged. This is the context of the image, that the heart of Pharaoh is made heavy; his sin and his unrighteousness weighs him down. I shared last Sunday about the incantations, the negative confessions, that had to be announced at in this scene. They are written all over the tomb walls: “I have not done wrong; I have not robbed; I have not stolen; I have not slain people; I have not stolen the property of the gods.” Can you imagine Pharaoh’s having to say those words? The Egyptians took even more elaborate preparation for this moment. It was the crucial moment, the life and death moment; all eternity was weighing in the balance, and their ultimate step of preparation was to prepare

scarab beetle amulets. These amulets were huge; they were larger than my hand, and they were placed over the top of the dead person's heart in the tomb. On the underside was written in hieroglyphs the words that should be spoken in that crucial moment with all eternity weighing in the balance:

“O my heart, which I had from my mother, the center of my being. Do not stand against me as a witness, do not oppose me in the judgment hall, in the presence of the keeper of the balance.”

The Lord says that He is making Pharaoh's heart heavy. It is a statement of condemnation and judgment. Maybe none of you, up to this point in your life, have been tempted to

fashion a dung beetle scarab and inscribe protective words on the bottom, but actually this thought may not be so far from you. I want to ask all of you this morning: What is it that is covering the sin of your heart? God answers that in the next scene.



We leave the court of Pharaoh, and God zooms into the community of Israel and explains what it is that covers the sin of His people. Time slows down; the pace of the narrative eases; and the Lord speaks to Moses and Aaron. He says in Exodus 12:2:

“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.”

God reordered the entire calendar of ancient Israel around this event. It is the springtime; it is the month of Nisan. The New Year in the civil calendar begins in the fall, and God reorders the calendar around this event. Nahum Sarna says: “The New Year is now grounded neither in nature’s renewal nor in mythology, but in an historic event. Such a phenomenon is without analogy in the ancient world.” God says this moment, in the late spring, will be the New Year because something happens on this day that is unlike any other day. God says in Exodus 12:3-5:

“Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. . . The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.”

The people guard and watch over the lamb for three days, and then on the 14th day of the month, the entire community of Israel, which we find out at the end of this chapter has swollen to 600,000 families, gathers together at the same moment, at twilight, and they slay these lambs. They are instructed not to boil them, because if you boil the meat, you have to break the bones. They are instructed to roast the meat because the roasting of the meat means that the meat is in fact a sacrifice. It is not a meal; it's a sacrifice, and 600,000 people at the moment of redemption are instructed to slay a lamb, and in Exodus 12:7:

“Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the

doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.”

They all do this together, at the same moment, and they eat the sacrifice, and God says that this is the Lord’s Passover. Is it possible for any of us not to see the prefigured work of the Lord Jesus Christ in this moment? The entire community is gathered, and the blood of a lamb is over their homes. The Lord says it is the Lord’s Passover. In Exodus 12:13, God says:

“The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

God is saying: “It is communicating to you, not to Me, but to you. What is it showing you? It’s showing you that when I see the blood of the lamb, I will pass over you.” What do you have this morning applied over your heart and your life? God tells His people the answer to the question, a question that must be answered. How is it that God makes a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites? The Passover Lamb is the answer. Israel deserves judgment, just as the Egyptians do. I deserve to be condemned to an eternal conscious hell. I do; David Palmer does, for the way that I have disregarded and dishonored God in my own life. If God made an absolute and just reckoning of my sins, He would be righteous to condemn me. I do not have a heart scarab amulet over my heart. I do not have words that I practice to say or a sleight of hand to do at the moment of eternity, but I do have one thing, and one thing only: I have the slain blood of Jesus Christ over my life, and I desire for every single one of you to know that I approach eternity without fear because the slain blood of the Lamb is over my life. God tells His people that this is the new, New Year, that this is then a celebration that is to be remembered forever, and people do as God commands. On a tremendous night, a night unlike any other night, they slay the lamb at twilight, they roast the lamb, they prepare everything, they ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold and clothing, and they eat the Passover lamb sacrifice. God moves out over the land in judgment, but God watches over them and He passes over all of the homes that have the blood of a lamb. We read then that 600,000 families begin to journey out from Ramses to Succoth, and we see that this great judgment does prove to be evangelistic in the end. In Exodus 12:38 we read:

“Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds.”

I love that that’s included, don’t you? I love that many Egyptians saw the God of the Bible and joined themselves with Israel. By the time Israel makes it to Mount Sinai, it’s a mixed multitude of ethnic Israelites and foreigners, who have attached themselves to the people. Some commentators stumble over that phrase. It’s a mixed multitude? Who is that? Some commentators think it’s the rabble that came out, the grumblers later. Rashi, who is the definitive Hebrew commentator, and I take sides with Rashi on this, says it’s actually a mixed multitude of proselytes and converts from among the nations. I think he is right. They joined

themselves with the people of God, and they come out. We read in Exodus 12:42 that they come out, and they make it out successfully:

“Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come.”

The people come out after living in Egypt 430 years to the day, and they come out with great possessions. They come out with freedom, the freedom to follow God, and they come out ultimately with the knowledge of what the cost of redemption is. They come out with the knowledge unique in the ancient world and unique to Christianity. No other faith has the answer to the question: How will my sins be forgiven? What do I need to do to make it successfully into eternity? We never know when this moment will come. We had a family that was very close to us. The husband died. He was murdered here in Cincinnati just a few days ago. We knew well the family of the man who was shot and killed at the ATM machine in Roselawn. He stepped into eternity, and we attended the visitation of this family on Friday night. The line looped all the way around inside the funeral home and out onto the street. The wife and the children had such calm, and the wife issued a public statement about her husband's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Dan Muscarella stepped into eternity without fear; he stepped into eternity because his life was covered by the blood of the Lamb. We learned on Friday night that he been speaking for the past three weeks about a great longing to see the face of Christ. May the Lord be glorified even in this. This morning I have just one great truth that I'm wanting every one of us to see and to believe. The great truth of this passage is that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. The great truth is that Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.

Communion:

Jesus told His disciples, on the night in which He was betrayed, that He eagerly longed to eat this Passover with them. This is a Passover meal, and Jesus took the bread of that Passover meal and He broke it in the presence of His disciples. He said: “This is My body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” Then He said: “This cup is the cup of the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” What is covering your sin this morning? You may rely on your good deeds. This is a terrible thing to rely on. Relying on your good deeds is like resting on a dry stick of bamboo on the edge of the Carew Tower. You may rely on your family history or the deeds of your parents or grandparents, and it is the same, unreliable. You may have your own version of the heart amulet, hoping that you will not be condemned. But the answer from Exodus 11 and 12 is that the one place to approach eternity with confidence is have the blood of the Lamb over you.

When I lived in China, I was gripped by the beauty of Chinese characters. They have a beautiful shape to them. It's a complex writing; a very old and ancient language. Some of these characters echo truths that are eternal. The Chinese character for



righteousness

is one of them. It is the word *yi*, and as beautiful as this character is to look at, it's really a composite of two characters. The top half is the character for

and the bottom is the character for *me*. How can you have righteousness this morning? You need the Lamb over you and you can lay aside any good deeds, any moral efforts, anything else, and you can know for sure that you have been redeemed by the cost of the shed blood of the Passover Lamb.



lamb

+

me

I want to invite all of us to place our trust in Christ this morning. Even if you've been a Christian for a long time, it is good just to say: "O Lamb of God, I trust You for my eternal salvation." Would you express your trust and faith in Him? Even if now is the first time you want to do that, place your trust in Him. If your trust is in Him, then you are welcome at His table, the table of the King. Amen.