

Exodus 12:33 - 13:22

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Good morning. It really is great to be with you this morning to come and share God's word together. As Paul said, my name is Oliver. Everyone calls me Ollie. Please feel free to do the same afterwards. And I've been working for a church in Stirling for just over two and a half years now as the assistant minister. And it's been great. Stirling is a lovely area. Now, I believe that you're currently looking through the book of Exodus. At least I hope that's right because that's the passage I've been given today from that book. And it's under the big theme, the great escape, the great escape.

This morning, this morning at last, the physical great escape from Egypt begins. Now, for those of you who may be new here this morning, Exodus is found in the first half of the Bible known as the Old Testament. And it's been made popular recently in the film Exodus, God and Kings by Ridley Scott. I think it's fair to say that most people know the first half of the book relatively well. So things like Moses in the basket, the burning bush, the ten plagues. But today, today we start to tread in less well-known territory. And our passage today starts following the end of the ten plagues. The final one, the plague of the firstborn has just taken place.

And in Exodus chapter 12, verse 30, it says, There was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. Every Egyptian house had someone dead in it. Imagine it. Imagine the noise, the crying and the wailing. It must have been immense. Anyway, we're just past that, but we've not yet reached the parting of the Red Sea.

Another well-known event. Hopefully, if you're new, that roughly tells you where we are in the book. End of the plagues, not yet at the Red Sea. We're in that in-between stage.

The passage we're looking at today was described by John, your pastor, as a buffet. And interestingly, today is your church lunch. Possibly our passage is a bit like a buffet, similar to that. So maybe you're going to have some pizza, some sausage rolls, some sandwiches, some crisps, some jelly for the kids, banoffee pie. I'm sure there's a lovely selection waiting for you. But reading through the passage that we're about to do, you'll feel as though it's a bit of this and a bit of that.

[2 : 5 1] But I think there is a theme which hopefully ties it all together. So let's read together Exodus chapter 12, verses 31 to chapter 13, 22. I'm going to read from the NIV. I think the version I've got is the same one you have in the pews. If it is, it's found on page 69.

Please do open your Bibles with me. That's page 69, starting at Exodus chapter 12, verse 31. During the night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, Up, leave my people, you and the Israelites. Go, worship the Lord as you have requested.

Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go, and also bless me. The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country, for otherwise, they said, we will all die. So the people took their dough before the yeast was added and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed towards the people, and they gave them what they asked for, so they plundered the Egyptians. The Israelites journeyed from Ramesses to Sukkoth. There were about 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. With the dough they had brought from Egypt, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast, because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves. Now the length of time the

Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord's divisions left Egypt. Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honour the Lord for the generations to come.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, These are the regulations for the Passover. No foreigner is to eat of it. Any slave you have brought may eat of it after you have circumcised him, but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it. It must be eaten inside one house. Take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. Any alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised. Then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same law applies to the native born and to the alien living among you.

[5 : 58] All the Israelites did just what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that day, the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions. The Lord said to Moses, Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal. Then Moses said to the people, Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand.

Eat nothing containing yeast. Today in the month of Abib, you are leaving. When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites, the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you are to observe this ceremony in this month. For seven days, eat bread made without yeast, and on the seventh day hold a festival to the Lord. Eat unleavened bread during those seven days. Nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. On that day, tell your son, I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord is to be on your lips.

For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year. After the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, you are to give over to the Lord the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the Lord.

Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. In days to come, when your son asks you, what does this mean? Say to him, with a mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the Lord the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons. And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, if they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt. So God led the people around by the desert road towards the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, God will surely come to your aid and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place. After leaving Succoth, they camped to Etham on the edge of the desert.

[9 : 06] By day, the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Amen. And may God bless his word to us. Well, let us pray before we look at this interesting passage. Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you so much for your living word to us this morning.

We thank you, Lord, that you have something to say to each and every person here today. And we pray, Lord, that you would help us all to be attentive and listen well. Please, Father God, may your spirit be at work among us, we ask, so that we may leave here changed for you.

We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen. Amen. Well, at the end of last year, my mum moved house. She downsized from a four-bedroom house, detached house, to a two-bedroom bungalow. Now, if anyone here has ever downsized house, you'll know it is not a good idea. There was furniture and boxes galore going from such a big house to such a small house. Always upsize if possible. Anyway, the consequence of the move was that my mum had lots of furniture she needed to pass on. So, for instance, we got a lovely chair.

My mum found a photo of my gran sitting in this lovely chair, and it's a small chair. My gran was a little old lady. It was something really nice to remember her by. My son got a painting. So, my great-great-aunt Lillian was an artist, and that has been passed on. She did lots of paintings, and this was a boat. It was a boat, and it was pulled upon the shore by the sea. Again, nice to remember. Nice for my son to have. And I was grateful for my mum sharing these stories. We also got my mum's dining room table and chairs. It doesn't fit in our house at the moment, but hopefully it will one day in the years to come. And hopefully when it does, we'll sit around the table and remember the times when I was a child and share memories. It's good, isn't it, to remember the past.

[11 : 41] Well, our passage today, again and again, tells us to remember what the Lord has done, to look back and remember that he is faithful, and that he did everything necessary to rescue the Israelites, and indeed us. And so we're going to do three things this morning. Firstly, we're going to deal with the slightly tougher bits of the passage. Secondly, we're going to follow the journey out of Egypt and see God's faithfulness. Finally, we'll zoom in on this theme of remembering.

Firstly, then, let's look at the tougher bits in the passage. Firstly, then, the tougher bits in the passage. And I think these feel tougher because they are harder to relate to today. So firstly, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, both of which you'll have covered last week to some degree.

And secondly, we're going to think about the consecration of the firstborn son. Both very, very important. But I'm sure if I asked any of you here who still celebrates the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or who still consecrates their firstborn son, certainly as they did, I'd get some pretty funny looks, as indeed I am. And very, very simply, as festivals, they don't mean a lot to us today.

But these two things are made very, very important for us because of Jesus Christ. And so what we're going to do is we're going to go from the festival or tradition to Jesus very quickly so that we can see the relevance. We're not going to spend long on this, partly because we would get bogged down and partly because you looked at some of this last week. So firstly, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So it's one festival. It's talked about in the passage in two separate places, but it's one festival. Ezra 6, Mark chapter 14 confirms it's one festival and they go together.

The Passover remembered the blood from a perfect lamb being put on the door frames of the homes of God's people. It protected the Israelite house and therefore family from the last plague, the death of the firstborn. The lamb and its blood were a substitute. And so what a great thing for the Israelites to remember, the Lord saving his people from death. Following this, the seven days after the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated. And that was to remember that on the very night that this plague happened, Pharaoh finally, he finally let his people go and they quickly left in haste. So chapter 12 verse 34, the people take their dough before yeast is added. It's unleavened bread, hence the festival. Now most of that should be fairly familiar. Our passage today adds some detail about who is allowed to share in the festival. So chapter 12 verse 47.

[15 : 19] It says the whole community of Israel must celebrate it. But then look at verse 43. End of verse 43. No foreigner is allowed. However, then jump to verse 48. If that person, if that stranger has shown faith in the Lord, faith in the Lord and all the males in his family are circumcised, then they too can share in the festival. So circumcision is key. It shows faith in the God of Israel. Now go to Jesus Christ.

And he is the perfect lamb who substitutes our place on the cross. And his blood protects us from eternal death by cleansing us from sin so that we can draw near to God. And we remember that today in the Lord's Supper or communion. And as a very, very simple application from this passage, only those who have faith in Jesus Christ are called to partake in that remembrance supper. Just like the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, all are welcome to join in, but the prerequisite is faith in Jesus Christ.

Going forward in Exodus, from this point, remember that everyone, everyone it says was welcome to become part of God's family, the Israelite community. They just had to demonstrate faith in the Lord. And the way that was visibly shown back then was by circumcision. That does come up again in later chapters. Everybody was welcome to join in. But let's quickly move on to the second tougher bit, the consecration of the firstborn son. So earlier in Exodus chapter 4, which you may remember, Israel, Israel as a group, as a nation, are called God's firstborn son. They're called God's firstborn son. And what God does through the plagues that you've been looking at is to buy back or to redeem Israel as his son. And to remember this, therefore, chapter 13, verse 12 to 13, every firstborn human and animal was to be consecrated or redeemed by the Israelites. In order to that to happen, in order to redeem something, a price, a price had to be paid. And so you can very quickly see the link to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. A human was to be redeemed with a lamb and an animal had to be redeemed with another animal. And the example in our passage in chapter 13, verse 13, is a donkey being redeemed with a lamb. So this is how they were consecrated to the Lord. But it's important to note even more than this, that it wasn't just the firstborn who was consecrated and redeemed. It was the whole family, the whole family, just as in Egypt. So this was to be remembered by the Israelites. The firstborn represented the family which was bought back for God as his son. So go to Jesus. Go to Jesus. In order for us to be God's children, the true Israel, Christ fully paid the price for us. He redeemed or consecrated us by the sacrifice of his son, buying us back to God spiritually forever as his sons and daughters. But even more than that, in Colossians chapter 1, verse 15, it says that Christ was the firstborn over firstborn over all creation. So just as the Israelite firstborn represented the whole family. So Christ fully represents us because he is God's child. We are God's children. We live in him, in Christ Jesus. And he therefore fully represents us before God. Now that has been pretty quick, even though it's been fairly brief, there's quite a lot in there. But I think they are the tougher bits in the passage. Please do not switch off. Stay with me. But I think it's been helpful to deal with that first. We are going to slow down now, though I promise. Let's move on then. We're going to now go out of Egypt. So secondly, the journey out of Egypt and God is faithful to his people.

And so we're going to go on a journey from Egypt to Etham. So remember, as I said, there's been loud wailing throughout Egypt. And so at last, chapter 12, verse 31, during the night, Pharaoh gets up and he says, up, leave, worship the Lord, take your families and your animals and go. There's fear.

There's fear among the Egyptians that they too might die. And so they urge the Israelites to go quickly and to hurry from their homes. As mentioned, they take their dough, still without yeast added.

[21 : 19] They plunder the Egyptians, taking clothes, gold and silver as instructed by Moses. Chapter 12, verse 37, they then journey from Ramesses to Succoth. And we're told in 37, just how massive this operation is. 600,000 men, probably the same in women and also children. So a figure I'm sure you've heard about already in your series in Exodus, about 2 million people leaving Egypt. That is a lot of people moving together. Plus, you've got all the cattle, all the flocks. Plus, verse 38, there's many other people with them. This is a big crowd. But together, verse 40, we're told they leave Egypt at the end of the end of the year. And they're going to go to chapter 13, verse 17. God leads the Israelites,

Israelites. But not the shorter route through the Philistine country, because God knew how vulnerable and weak the Israelites were. If they faced war, they may run back to Egypt. So God protects his people and takes them the longer desert route towards the Red Sea. Verse 19, we're told they carry Joseph's bones with them. And that was a symbol of where God was leading them to the promised land. So when Joseph died, he asked for his bones to be taken to the place promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

That was back in Genesis 50, 24. And here, the bones are being taken. So it's been 430 years of slavery in Egypt. Yet this promise is kept. And these bones are being faithfully carried.

Joseph said, all those hundreds of years earlier, God will surely come to your aid. And amen, God has. And they're on their way to the promised land. So finally, in verse 20, they leave Succoth and camp at Etham on the edge of the desert. And it's here that we're told about the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, God's presence with them, leading them, so that they could travel both by day and night. Verse 22 says, they never left their place in front of the people, the Lord going ahead before his people, the Lord going ahead and night. And a well-known story fits very well here.

As many of you'll know, at the top of Candlemaker Row in Edinburgh, there's a pub called the Greyfriars Bobby, with a statue of a Sky Terrier dog outside. And the story goes that this dog called Bobby, who belonged to a man called John Grey, a night watchman. Upon his death, Bobby spent the next 14 years, 14 years faithfully sitting by the graveside of his master until he himself died and was buried nearby.

[25 : 06] What a very, very faithful dog, remembering and looking back to his devoted master. I want you to consider the original readers of these chapters in Exodus, the Israelites looking back and remembering their ancestors. God was faithful. He rescued them from Egypt, both as the Lord had said through Moses, but also as Joseph had said 430 years earlier. God will surely come to your aid.

God was faithful. They all leave together. People and animals, all two million of them. God was faithful. They plundered the Egyptians as expected and leave equipped. God was faithful. They are led by God in his providence by the longer route and by his continual presence by the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire.

As a member of God's family. As a member of God's family, how would you feel looking back and remembering God's faithfulness? It's powerful, isn't it? It's reassuring. God was with his people then. He didn't abandon them as soon as they stepped foot outside Egypt.

And he's with us today. And we sometimes forget to look back and remember God's faithfulness. But we must. And it's particularly helpful when you're struggling or when you're going through difficulties.

When your job is highly stressful. When you're going through difficulties in your marriage. Look back and remember the times when God has been faithful and therefore will be again.

[27 : 08] Maybe you're in that place at the moment. And that place is very hard. The burden is great. And actually you're struggling. You're struggling to think of a time when God has faithfully carried you or brought you through a previous situation.

Well keep going back. Go back even further. Go back 2,000 years. And remember God's faithfulness on the cross.

God was with them. And I think as the future generations of Israelites looked back and remembered God's faithfulness. It would have been hugely helpful. Look back. Remember God's faithfulness.

And may that be a strength and a help to you. Finally, let's look a bit further at the theme of remembering.

And I want to ask the question, how did the Israelites remember these things? How did the Israelites remember them? Look again at the passage with me.

[28 : 43] Chapter 12, verse 42. It said, Move with me to chapter 13, verse 3.

Moses said to the people, Commemorate this day. Chapter 13, verse 5. In the promised land you are to observe.

You're to observe this ceremony. Move down to chapter 13, verse 8. On that day, tell your sons, I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

Chapter 13, verse 14. When your son asks, What does this mean? Tell him with a mighty hand, The Lord brought us out of slavery.

And chapter 13, verse 16. Again, it shall be like a sign on your hand, And a symbol on your forehead, That the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

[29 : 50] With all these things, God's rescue from Egypt, The consecration of the firstborn, His faithfulness, How were the Israelites to remember?

They were to commemorate the day, Observe the ceremony, Tell your sons, Talk about it with the next generation, Celebrate His goodness, And make it obvious to everyone.

And you can picture that. The Israelites didn't have individual copies of, Certainly not the Bible, But even the book of Exodus to read. They reminded themselves with festivals, And in particular, By talking about it, By sharing together, By telling their children, And the next generation.

They would tell each other, About the Lord's mighty hand, In delivering them from Egypt. They would describe the pillar of cloud, And the pillar of fire, Whatever that looked like.

And they would talk about, Why they consecrated their firstborn. They would talk about it, To remember it. I love the picture, Of the sign on your hand, And the symbol on your forehead.

[31 : 06] What are the two parts, Of your body, That are always visible? It's your face, And your hands. From the way you tell your sons, From the way you talk about these things, It will be obvious, They will be well known, And remembered.

Everyone will know, About these things. Most of us, Most of us are very, Very good, At talking about something.

Whether it's the football, Or rugby, Or cricket, Whether it's broad church, Or eastenders, Whether it's the food, We've eaten, The clothes we've bought, Or our week at work.

Maybe it's the stories, From our previous week, Or even from our childhood. We remember them well, And talk about these things often.

And often it's good, To remember things, And to share stories. But I wonder how much, We talk about the Lord, And whether it's with the same excitement.

[32 : 13] And I think our passage strongly encourages us, To talk about the Lord, To remember him, As we speak about him, Especially to the next generation.

For people to see, And to hear, Just how much, The Lord means to us. We don't celebrate festivals, Like the Israelites did, Or consecrate our first born sons, As they did.

But we do have a great gospel, To remember, And talk about. So I encourage you, To tell each other, About the Lord's faithfulness, In your life.

Remember his faithfulness, In your home, Your family, Your work. Next time you meet up for coffee, Or lunch, Or dinner, Make a point, Of remembering something, That God has done for you, In the past week, Or the past year.

And may that become, The most natural thing, In the world for you, To talk about. I encourage you to remind each other, Of the Lord's death.

[33 : 27] Remember each other, Of what Jesus has done, And achieve for you, On the cross. Yes of course, We have that reminder, In our Bibles. Yes of course, We come together on a Sunday, And in small groups, Through the week.

But let's also talk about that, When we meet every day, Just as something, That's on our lips, And we can't help to speak about. The more you talk, About these things, The more you remember them, The more it will help you, In your struggles.

It will help you, When you're tempted. It will help you, When life is hard. And not just you, But the person, You're speaking with.

It will help them, As well. I think the application, To children, And our corporate responsibility, To them, Is obvious. As a church, We are a family.

And the spiritual growth, Of our children, Should be important, To every adult here, As I'm sure it is. I started by sharing, About the stories, That my mum told me, And those I hope, To tell my children.

[34 : 42] And I'm challenged, To make sure I spend, Even more time, Talking about the Lord, His grace, His goodness, His faithfulness, Over the years, Than I do any other stories.

Like the hands, And the face, May our faith, Be very obvious, To everyone. May we remember, Openly, That with a mighty hand, The Lord brought us, Out of slavery, And back, Into his, Eternal family.

Well let's pray together. Let's pray. Father God, We thank you so much, For your word to us. We thank you Lord, That there was so much, In that passage.

But Father there was, We pray something, Very relevant, For each of us here. Lord we're challenged, On how often, We speak about you. How often we talk about you, And remember you, To others.

Lord we acknowledge together, That the blessings, That come from you, Are abundant. Every day we receive, From you. And we want to remember that, With thanks.

[35 : 53] We want to remember that, Not just ourselves, But when we speak, With our families, And our friends, And our colleagues, May we talk openly, And remember you, Just as the Israelites did, Thousands of years ago, With each other, And their children.

May we do the same today, As we remember your goodness, In our lives. Father God, I want to pray especially, For those here today, Who may be struggling, Or going through hard times.

Lord be with them, And help them, In their difficulties, To remember your faithfulness. May they remember, A time in their lives, When you have been faithful, And Lord may they remember, Ultimately your great faithfulness, On the cross, Where your son, Paid the perfect sacrifice for us, Paying the price, For our sins.

Lord God, We thank you for our time together, This morning, And the blessing it's been, In your name Jesus we pray, Amen. Amen.