

*Sermon on Exodus 11 & 12 prepared by Jonathan Shradar*

We live for defining moments... The moment we said “I do,” the crash we walked away from, the last straw, or the reunion of the wanderer. Even in our study of the stories in Exodus, even in recognizing we exist to glorify God, just like Pharaoh and all of creation, it is the defining moments in which we do so. It is to such a moment we come in our study today.

You can imagine it...

Darkness had fallen and even in the breeze you could sense the tension of the atmosphere, as if something terrible was going to happen. Stillness. Murmuring. Anticipation.

Out of the darkness there is a cry, like never heard before. A death. The earth quakes... life and all of history is altered, its course corrected and realigned.

A moment of judgment and salvation... a miracle brought to take on what was deserved and bring captives out of oppression. And it is this moment that another moment points to. A moment in Egypt, a final pledge of freedom and a deliverance of God’s people.

As we look at the Passover, the final plague to strike Pharaoh, our goal is to see that: **All of life is defined by the moment of judgment and salvation.**

**Exodus 11:1-10** “The LORD said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely. [2] Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.” [3] And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.

[4] So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, [5] 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. [6] There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. [7] 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.’ [8] And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ And after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. [9] Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

[10] Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.” (ESV)

**All of life is defined by the moment of judgment and salvation.**

The plagues have played out and we land here, with the final stroke against Pharaoh and all of Egypt, the revelation of God’s power. A people promised freedom, the owners of covenantal hope, waiting for generations and God has come. He is moving, acting, redeeming his people.

The cycle of warning, plague and relent has gone on through nine episodes each building and heading toward this, the most painful moment. From annoyance, blood in the Nile, frogs, gnats and flies, to death of livestock, painful boils on the skin, hail that strikes down man and animal the same, locusts that devour things of value and a darkness that can be felt.

The Passover, the plague of death to the firstborn of every household is a moment of judgment and salvation and it ultimately points to another moment to come, when the two will be accomplished changing the trajectory of history.

Our path will be to witness the judgment, see the salvation and embrace the cross of Christ as our moment, our defining miracle.

## 1) Judgment

Pharaoh, as the king of Egypt and the oppressor of the Hebrews, continues to reject God's call to let the people go. He just can't stop seeing himself as god... that he is the highest deity, above all. And Egypt follows him, in their thinking and in their religious practices.

Idols are worshiped and above them is Pharaoh. And following the decree of Pharaoh, even though they were aware this God of the Hebrews, they thought of him nothing more than a slaves idol, and denied calls to release the people that they might worship.

Egypt living the human condition. Running after themselves, disregarding God.

**Romans 1:21-23** "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (ESV)

This God had been revealed as powerful, controlling nature and out performing the magicians of Egypt. Yet Pharaoh hardened his heart and continue to defy.

"Yet one more plague I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt..."

"With this plague God would punish the Egyptians for their sins, and justly so. The death of the firstborn was an act of justice because Pharaoh had tried to exterminate the Israelites. Exodus began with attempted genocide, and it was only right for God to judge the Egyptians for their murderous intent. The wailing that went up from the Egyptians was fair punishment for the way they had made the Israelites wail for more than four hundred years. In both cases the Bible uses the same word to describe their lament. According to God's perfect justice, it was Egypt's turn to cry out in distress."

"But God's justice goes deeper. The Egyptians deserved to die because they were sinners by nature, and death has always been the wages of sin. Every last one of Egypt's sons was born in sin. Like everyone else, the Egyptians sinned in Adam and thus inherited from him a sinful nature. Then they compounded their guilt by committing many sins of their own: worshiping idols, oppressing their slaves, and so forth. God would have been justified in putting them all to death." Ryken

Really, given God's penalty against our sin, the question is not if we are going to die but when.

In the face of the plagues the appropriate response would have been to let the people go (obedient) and then to worship the God who was above all. Egypt saw God's power, yet they did not give their lives in service of him, for his glory...

Judgment came. **Exodus 12:29-32** "At midnight the LORD struck down 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 the livestock. [30] And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead."

This is Pharaoh's defining moment, Egypt's defining moment, judgment. It is their destruction. Those that stand opposed to God reserve, deserve, and experience judgment.

God's covenant promise not only brings judgment on those in opposition to him, it works salvation, freedom for those once captive.

[31] "Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. [32] Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!" (ESV)

## 2) Salvation

Here are the slaves, the people of Israel, they deserve what Egypt received... but God's covenant with them, his grace toward them saves them. The promise was coming to pass, a new geography, new circumstance, the riches of silver and gold given by Egyptian neighbors...

Israel's redemption, their victory is won in the moment of judgment and salvation.

As the story unfolds the hebrews were not to stand idly by but were to prepare for departure, and to have one more important meal, a sacrificial meal of a perfect, spotless lamb. The shed blood to be painted on their doorposts showing they were covered by the blood.

Because in their sin they too deserve judgment, so blood must flow in order to be a sign for them, the sign God will passover when he brings judgment. By instituting the sacrifice of a lamb, "God provided what God required: a substitute sacrifice to die for his people."

They would eat the roasted lamb with bitter herbs as a reminder of their bitter struggle in Egypt. And they would eat in haste, with urgency, ready to go. From that moment forth this meal would be a sign for them, a reminder of God's covenantal care for them.

By no act of their own, by being chosen by God for relationship and blessing, by being obedient to his provision, they are set to leave the captivity that had been all they knew for 400 years...

And everything changes at this pivot moment. Even their calendar was to start from this moment. **Exodus 12:2** "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. (ESV)

Everything that follows would mark this moment, would remind the people of their Exodus. **Exodus 12:14** “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. (ESV)

A people will be tested, God will continue to provide, a land will be given, a nation established. Kings will come and the temple of worship will be built and cherished. This moment remembered in all of it... even through future exile and slavery, and then restoration to the land.

It is a moment that is defining for them, as covenant people... redeemed. Saved.

### **All of life is defined by the moment of judgment and salvation.**

God’s redemptive story rolls on and ultimately points to another moment to come. To the need for another spotless lamb, for blood to cover the people...

Passover points to another moment when disregard of God, the embrace of sin, is judged and salvation received. To the moment we began with this morning, the darkness, the cry, the quaking earth... the Cross of Christ.

### **3) The Cross of Christ**

Jonathan Edwards “Christ and his redemption are the subject of the whole Word of God.”

Something deeper than a nation, than a land is at stake. There is redemption to be had for not just one people but for all people. And the covenant making God will establish a new covenant by his own blood to bring freedom, new life, eternity for those who believe.

Jesus our Passover Lamb sacrificed for us. God provides what God requires. As John the Baptist would declare, **John 1:29b** “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (ESV)

During the commemoration of the Passover, the anointed One, Jesus, would be tried for claiming he was God... he would be stripped and beaten... hung on a criminal’s cross. To die... to cover sin.

“It is theologically significant that Jesus was crucified right at the same time of the Passover feast. This helps us see the connection between the first Passover and the final Passover - the Passion of Christ. The day that Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the very day that the Passover lambs were driven into the city, and when Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples, he was celebrating the Passover. He said, “This is my body... this is my blood.” His disciples didn’t understand it at the time, but Jesus was really saying, “The Passover is all about me. I am the sacrificial lamb.”

“Then Christ was crucified. It was late in the afternoon on the eve of Passover. At twilight, lambs would be sacrificed by every household, according to the Law of Moses. All over the city fathers were getting ready to make the offering, gathering their families together and saying, “God has provided a lamb for us.” Over at the temple the high priest was also preparing a lamb to present as an atonement for Israel’s sin. Then there was Jesus, hanging on the cross, with the sacrificial blood flowing from his hands and side. He was the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world.”

Judgment and salvation together, on the cross. His blood, his death meeting the full weight of what we all deserve - as a propitiation for us - as a satisfaction of our wrath against sin, the disregard of God. Judgment met. Salvation given. To those that believe in him, freedom, new life, and exodus from captivity to sin...

It is defining. Here we sit on this side of the cross, no longer waiting for a new geography but given a spiritual place, eternal circumstances - in Christ.

Everything now points to this moment... the meal of communion we take, the worship we sing, the word we read and cherish. All of it, reminder of what God has done in Christ for his people.

As the Hebrews walk out of Egypt there is nearly no way they can think of what is still to come, that their freedom will point to the defining moment of history, to the new calendar, to the marking of time from this act of God...

But since we have this view, we always run to the cross, to this place of our salvation... of Jesus and his grace given for us. It defines us, as children of God, redeemed, claimed, empowered, freed, secure in him.

**All of life is defined by the moment of judgment and salvation.**

*Response:* The challenge is that even if you don't believe in Jesus this moment still defines you. That you remain under judgment for sin, for idolatry, for seeing yourself as god. But you can have today a new definition. As long as you have breath in your lungs, you can cling to this gift, to Jesus.

God has provided a lamb for us.

**Participate in it** - Believe in Jesus, our passover lamb, that he lived obediently before God, that he died as a substitute for you and that he was raised to give you new life in him. Turn from the old ways of your life and trust in him.

“What God requires is faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation comes by trusting in his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. In the same way that the Egyptians needed to get out of Egypt, sinners need to leave their bondage to sin and come to Jesus.”

Christian, keep coming back to the cross, as you reminder and as they way to stay out of bondage again to sin. Rejoice in the gift of the cross, of redemption in Jesus. Know him, as he dwells in you, experience his presence in all of life.

**Prioritize it** - Make every meal a remembrance. Let nothing get in the way of your relationship with Jesus and your time with him, in prayer, in following, in cherishing him with other saved misfits. Yield your life to Jesus. Let this define you!

**All of life is defined by the moment of judgment and salvation.** This moment is the cross and it is for you...

*Close* - Defined by it, we now live, always going back to the cross.

O my Savior, I thank You from the depths of my being  
for Your wondrous grace and love  
in bearing my sin in Your own body on the tree.

May Your cross be to me  
as the tree that sweetens my bitter Marahs,  
as the rod that blossoms with life and beauty,  
as the brazen serpent that calls forth the look of faith.

By Your cross crucify my every sin;  
Use it to increase my intimacy with Yourself;

Make it the ground of all my comfort,  
the liveliness of all my duties,  
the sum of all Your gospel promises,  
the comfort of all my afflictions,  
the vigor of my love, thankfulness, graces,  
the very essence of my religion;

And by it give me that rest without rest,  
the rest of ceaseless praise. - Valley of Vision