

Redemption & Remembrance Exodus 12:29-13:16

1. The Deliverance of God's People from Slavery (12:29-42)

[29] 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.

[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!"

[33] The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." [34] So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. [35] The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. [36] And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

[37] And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. [38] A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. [39] And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

[40] The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. [41] At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. [42] It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations.

Deliverance through Judgment

Before God delivers his people, he first comes into Egypt in judgment for their sin, as he had warned Pharaoh. That night, as verse 29 says, "the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt."

And, it was this act of judgment that was the means by which God would deliver his people. God knew this final act of judgment would be the action that would finally break Pharaoh of his resistance and cause him to finally let God's people go. So, in verses 31-32, after the death of all the firstborn in Egypt, Pharaoh and the Egyptians urgently plead for the Israelites to go.

So, in this act of judgment, God was also delivering his people. He was saving his people through judging wickedness. We see this pattern of God's salvation through judgment throughout Scripture. At the flood, God judged the world by sending the flood, but provided salvation through the ark. At the Red Sea, we will see God judgment upon his enemies by drowning them in the waters, but we see the salvation of God's people through the waters.

And we see this pattern most fully when Christ is on the cross. There, the judgment and salvation of God were on full display. There, Jesus endured the judgment of God in the place of sinners. And in his very act of undergoing our judgment, he brought us salvation. What a merciful God to *judge our sins* and *save us from sins* in the death of his Son!

Deliverance from Slavery

So, we see first of all that God's deliverance came through judgment. But what was the nature of God's deliverance? It was both a deliverance *from* something bad and *to* something good.

First, it was a *deliverance from slavery*. Exodus 13:3 says, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery." For so long they had lived as slaves, under the rule of a cruel tyrant. But now finally God was freeing them from slavery.

But they were not only delivered from something bad - slavery to Pharaoh. They were also delivered to something good - service to the Lord. In 12:31, Pharaoh finally relents and tells Israel that they may go to "serve the Lord." The word "serve" here is built on the *same Hebrew root as the word "slavery"* in 13:3. Commentator Jay Sklar puts it helpfully when he says,

"Salvation is not simply freedom from a cruel taskmaster but includes freedom to serve the right master."

Finally, God has freed Israel from an evil tyrant and they were now free to serve the Lord.

But as the story of God's redemption develops throughout Scripture, it becomes clear that Israel's deliverance from slavery was intended by God to serve as a picture of what the coming Deliverer would do to free us from the tyranny of Satan and sin. Through the death of Christ on the cross, we are freed from their slavery.

- Satan: Hebrews 2:14–15 - “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself [Jesus] likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”
- Sin: Romans 6:6 - “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” And, more than that, Romans 6:22, says that in Christ we have “have become slaves/servants of God.” And that is the only place you will find true freedom.

Application

(1) Friends, if you’re here today, and you have never experienced this freedom, Jesus invites you to himself today. In John 8, Jesus said “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” but “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” The call to follow Christ is a call to freedom. Satan and sin have led this world into the death, decay, and destruction that is all around us. And we are all born into that. But Jesus came to free us from that.

Coming to Christ will free you from slavery to all of that. Don’t get me wrong. This freedom does not mean that sin and Satan will no longer be a struggle when you come to Christ. But, it does mean that you will be freed from the hold they have over you. They will no longer have the power over you that they once did. And even when you sin, and struggle with sin, nothing will change the fact that you are free. If you come to Christ, you will find in him and from him, forgiveness of your sins, and freedom from slavery to your sins. That’s good news!

(2) Brother and sister in Christ, still in your struggle with him, remember that you are no longer a slave to sin. That is your unchangeable identity in Christ. In your continuing battles with sin, you may at times feel like you’re still a slave. But, brother or sister, you are not.

The song we sang earlier, rejoices in this truth: “I was lost when you came for me, Held in chains by the enemy, But You broke them in victory, Now I’m free, I am free.” That is the truth you need to preach to your heart when you feel defeated by your sin. In Christ, you are no longer a slave to sin.

Look back to all that God brought about in you since he has saved you. Look back to the sins you once struggled but that he has now delivered you from. I know it is easy to only see the sins you are currently battling. If your focus remains on your sins, you will feel helpless. But if your eyes are fixed on your Savior, and the freedom he has won for you through his cross, you will have unshakable hope. Brother or sister in Christ, you are free from slavery to sin through Christ. You now are a slave to God, which is perfect freedom. Preach that truth to yourself often. Surround yourself with brothers and sisters who will preach that truth to your heart also. And they need you to preach that truth to their hearts too. And more and more, as we together take hold of this truth, we will come to know more of the freedom that Christ has purchased for us through his death and resurrection.

God's Promised Deliverance

Israel's deliverance from slavery is the main point in these verses. But, there is much more about Israel's deliverance in these verses. For the sake of time, we'll briefly highlight the other aspects of their deliverance. As we will see, they are all a fulfillment of God's original promises to Abraham centuries before.

Deliverance with Great Possessions - In verses 35-36, when the Israelites had asked the Egyptians for silver, gold, and clothing, they gave it to them because, as verse 36 says, God had "given them favor in the sight of the Egyptians." This was in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:14, where God says that he would "bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions."

Deliverance in Great Number - We also see the great number of their deliverance. Verse 37 tells us that "about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children" came out from Egypt. Some estimate this could have been in the two million range, or more. This also was God fulfilling his promise of a great offspring to Abraham in Genesis 15:5, where he says, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them...So shall your offspring be."

Deliverance with a Mixed Multitude - In verse 38, we find a surprising detail that a "mixed multitude" went out with Israel, referring to people from other nationalities. Again, we are reminded of God's promise to Abraham that in him all the families and nations of the earth would be blessed. God's plan through Abraham, and ultimately through Abraham's offspring, Christ, was not that the Israelites only would experience God's blessing, but that all the nations of the earth would eventually experience God's blessing. We see the beginnings of that here.

Deliverance, According to Promise - Lastly, this section ends with such beautiful words of the end of Israel's long sojourning in Egypt. They had lived for 430 years in this land, much of that time as slaves. Now, just as God has foretold to Abraham that his descendants would be "afflicted for four hundred years" in a foreign land (400 years being a rounded number), God too had kept his word. Everything was happening precisely according to his plan.

Transition

Now, we see next that Moses moves from recounting the story of the Exodus to instructions on three commemorations or signs that God ordained for Israel that they would never forget the greatness of their redemption. Moses, first, provides further instructions on the Passover meal.

2. A Meal for God's Marked-out People (12:43-51)

Verse 42 provides a transition from the narrative of Israel's Exodus into further instructions on their yearly celebration of the Passover: "It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations."

The focus of the instructions on the Passover here is not to explain its meaning as the annual remembrance of the firstborn of Israel who were spared from death by the sacrifice of a lamb. The focus of the instructions in these verses, instead, is primarily on *who* is able to partake in the Passover. Since there was now a "mixed multitude" of other peoples with Israel, these instructions would have been necessary for their future celebrations of the Passover.

[43] And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, [44] but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. [45] No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. [46] It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. [47] All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. [48] If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. [49] There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you." [50] All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. [51] And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

So, who were those who were able to eat the Passover? One had to be marked-out as belonging to God's people. And this mark was circumcision. We see this in verse 48, which says, "If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it." Foreigners, slaves/servants, and hired workers were only able to eat of the Passover if their males were *circumcised*. Why?

Well, the Passover was a meal for God's redeemed, covenant people. And the sign of belonging to God's covenantal people was that all males had to receive the sign of the covenant. It was not enough for a person, family, or people group to live in the land of Israel and to obey their laws. They first had to unite themselves to Israel's God and receive the sign of belonging to God's people.

This shows both the *exclusivity* of the gospel and *unreversed welcome* of the gospel. The Bible is abundantly clear that the only way people are justified, made right before God, is through faith in God and his promise of salvation through his Son. There are not many ways to the one God. There is one way to the one God. But that one God holds out his offer of salvation to all people, no matter their nation, background, or status. None are excluded from his offer. All are invited to find a seat at his table.

Remember God's promise to Abraham, that through him and his offspring, Jesus, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The nations were under the curse of God in their sin. But Jesus would come for those under the curse, bearing the curse for them. And through bearing their curse, he would bring them into God's blessing.

Galatians 3:13–14 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’—[14] so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles [nations], so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”

God's plan was always for the nations to be welcomed into his family. Praise God that a bunch of Gentiles like us have been offered that invitation and, by the grace of God, have been welcomed into that family and given a seat around his table.

Jesus offers that welcome to you today, if you do not yet know him. He died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead so that all may be welcomed to the salvation he freely offers. Your past, your background, your sins, none of that excludes you from being welcomed by Christ today. Come to Christ with your nothing, and he will give you everything. So, what are you waiting for? Come to him today. Trust in him today.

Application

So what does the Passover meal for God's mark-out people mean for us today?

As new covenant believers, the meal that Christ constituted for *us* as God's marked-out people is Communion. There are several implications that flow from this passage that should influence how we approach our celebration of communion.

(1) A passage like this is part of the reason that we only invite baptized believers to partake in communion. Just as God permitted only his marked-out people to partake in the Passover, so Christ's church should only permit God's marked-out people to partake in communion. If you have not yet believed in Christ, or if you have come to faith in Christ, but have not yet been marked by Christ in baptism, we urge you first to believe in Christ and identify with Christ and his people in baptism. Then to be welcomed to celebrate communion.

(2) This also means that we do not require someone to be a member of our church in order to partake in communion. Some of us grew up in church traditions that practiced “closed communion,” meaning that only members of their own local churches were able to partake in communion. While we understand that there is a good desire behind that - to ensure that only those a church has been able to affirm as a Christian are able to partake in communion, we believe that restricts too much what we find in Scripture. Communion is a family meal. And if you are a member of God’s family, through faith in Christ, marked by baptism, in good standing with either our church or another gospel preaching church, we believe you are welcome to the table of the Lord.

If you are not yet a believer in Christ, what would we encourage you to do during our times of communion at Faith?

(1) When we celebrate communion, we will never ask you to pretend to be anything you’re not. If you’re not a Christian, we don’t want you to feel any pressure to pretend to be a Christian by partaking in communion. And in love, we would plead with you to refrain, because God gives warnings to those who partake in an unworthy manner. And partaking without believing would be partaking in an unworthy manner.

Maybe not partaking feels a bit awkward, or maybe you feel like, “Well everyone is going to be looking at me.” No, we’re all busy looking at Christ. We’re so happy you are here, and our desire is that you’ll see more of Christ during our services.

(2) So, during our communion services, we would just encourage you to witness what the church is doing. Think on and consider the words our pastors speak before communion. Witness God’s people partaking in the bread and wine, and we have an open heart to reality that there is a God who could love sinners enough to bleed and die for them. During communion, you might even take some of that time to pray that Christ would reveal himself to you, and open you to the reality of who he is.

Transition

So, in verse 12:43-51, Israel is given the first sign and commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt, in the Passover Meal. This would serve as a perpetual reminder of the deliverance that God provided for their firstborn sons through the death of a lamb. But there are two additional signs that God gave to his people to ensure that they would never forget how great his salvation was for them. The next is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a feast which celebrated God’s strong salvation in their exodus from Egypt.

3. A Feast of God's Strong Salvation (13:3-10)

Let's read about it together in verses 13:3-10.

[3] Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. [4] Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. [5] And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. [6] Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. [7] Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. [8] You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' [9] And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. [10] You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.

In verse 3, the fundamental purpose for this seven day feast, which began with the Passover meal, was to "remember this day in which you came out from Egypt." Also, in verse 9, it was to be "as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes" - or, as we might say today, a string on your finger.

Along with that remembrance, as we find in verse 8, it was also to be a teaching opportunity to teach one's children about the great act of God in their deliverance from Egypt.

The teaching aspect of the feast of unleavened bread was through the use of unleavened bread. Israel's salvation came so swiftly and powerfully that their bread did not even have time to rise. The haste with which they left Egypt showed how powerful and strong God was to save them. Two times we see in verses 3 and 9 that it was with a "strong hand" that God brought them out of Egypt. All the plagues showed the strength of God, but this final plague revealed his strength in an even greater way. This was God proving that when it is his time to save his people, he will save them. No one would be able to withstand it.

Often in the Old Testament we see God save his people through great and miraculous acts of power. At the Red Sea, we see the power of God in parting the waters for Israel to pass over. In the military victories of the Israelites over the Canaanites, some of whom were giants compared to them, God showed his strong hand.

But something different would happen in the salvation from sin and Satan that God would provide through Christ. Whereas, in Israel's salvation from Egypt, God showed his power in incredible signs and wonders, in the salvation from sin, God showed his power in weakness. On the cross, God's strong salvation was seen in a bleeding and dying man from Galilee, hanging from a cross, struggling for breath, abandoned, mocked, and ridiculed.

The gospel says, if you want to be saved, you must look to that man, hanging on a cross, and trust in him alone for your salvation. That is completely foolish to so many. It is an affront to our dignity to stoop to that level to receive salvation. But that is God's way. That is the only way God saves and it is your only home.

But in the apparent weakness of the cross, Christ was strong and victorious to save. The cross was victory through sacrifice. It was there, bleeding and dying as our sacrifice, that Christ was conquering our sins and defeating Satan and the demonic powers.

The strong salvation of God was seen most fully and decisively in Christ's death for us on the cross. And God too has given us a feast, in communion, to always remember his strong salvation.

Application

Brothers and sisters, come to the Lord's table each time we celebrate it, as a fresh reminder of your God who is strong to save. When you come with the weight of your sin, remember there is no sin that is stronger than his mercy. When you eat the bread, remember the body of Jesus wounded and broken for your healing. When drink the cup, remember the blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse you from every sin. As the old hymn says:

Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? / There's power in the blood, power in the blood
Sin-stains are lost in its life-giving flow / there's wonderful power in the blood.
There is power, power, wonder-working power / in the blood of the Lamb;
There is power, power, wonder-working power / in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Transition

Now, the last of the three signs of commemoration of Israel's deliverance is seen in verses 1-2 and 11-16.

4. The Consecration of God's Firstborn (13:1-2, 11-16)

[1] *The LORD said to Moses, [2] "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."*

[11] “When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, [12] you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD’s. [13] Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. [14] And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. [15] For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ [16] It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

Consecration

First, it might be helpful to define the term consecration, since it’s not a word we typically use today. Consecrate means to “*make holy by giving wholly to God.*” They were to do this, according to verse 2, for “all the firstborn,” whether man or beast. God says of the firstborn, at the end of verse 2, they are “mine.”

Before we get to the specifics of this consecration, we see first the purpose of this consecration, which was to serve as a perpetual reminder that all the firstborn of Israel, both man and beast were spared from God’s judgment that he poured out on the Egyptians. Parents were to tell their children, in verse 15, “For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.” God spared their firstborn in Egypt. Now, in response, they were to devote their firstborn wholly to the Lord.

The consecration of the firstborn was different for each, depending on whether it was a clean or unclean animal, or a firstborn son. In verse 16, clean animals, like a lamb, which could be sacrificed were to be sacrificed to the Lord. In verse 13, unclean animals, such as a donkey, which could not be sacrificed, were either to be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb. Or, if for whatever reason a person did not redeem the donkey, they were to break its neck, likely to symbolize its life being given back to God.

Also in verse 13, for the firstborn sons, they were also to be redeemed. We are not told here how they were to be redeemed. It may be implied that they, like the donkeys, were to be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb. But we do find later that God gives instructions in Numbers 18:16 that the firstborn sons were to be redeemed by “five shekels in silver” for the service of the temple. In either case, the redemption price was costly.

So, whether through the firstborn animal or firstborn son, they were to be given wholly to the Lord. They belonged wholly to him.

But there is a deeper reality that I think God was intending to communicate through the consecration of the firstborn. Remember in Exodus 4:14, God says, “Israel is my firstborn son.” Just as God redeemed the firstborn of Israel through the passover lamb, so God was redeeming his firstborn son, his people as a whole. And just as the firstborn sons of Israel were to be consecrated wholly to the Lord, Israel, God’s firstborn son, was to be consecrated wholly to the Lord.

God had redeemed them. And they now belonged entirely to him. Israel no longer belonged to Pharaoh. They had a new master, a new Lord. They were to be consecrated wholly unto him.

This is the truth that we see throughout Scripture. Those that God saves he sanctifies. He consecrates them and they now belong wholly unto him. As 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 says, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.”

We see Exodus language in 1 Peter 1:14–19 where believers, as those who have been ransomed through the blood of Christ, are called to be holy in all their conduct.

[14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, [15] but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, [16] since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” [17] And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

The only proper response from those who have been redeemed by Christ is to say, “Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.”

Application

Brothers and sisters, what areas of your life have not yet been consecrated to the Lord? In what areas of your life are you claiming, “mine” where God is saying, “That too belongs to me.” Don’t you know enough of the pain of refusing to surrender that to him? Can’t you remember the peace you experienced in the past when you finally surrendered some sin over to him.

That is what you were made for. That is what God redeemed you for.

Brothers and sisters, God is only out to destroy those things that are destroying you. He is absolutely committed to do a beautiful and glorious work in your life so that your redeemed life will display the power of his grace to take a hell-bound sinner and make you holy.

That holiness is hard. And it takes time - a lifetime. But do not look to yourself for that holiness. Look to your Redeemer and Deliverer. The God who saved you is the God who will sanctify you.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, remember that God has powerfully redeemed you from slavery to a cruel taskmaster to serve him as your perfect master.

- Remember it through recounting the gospel story.
- Remember it through partaking in communion.
- Remember that there is nothing for you in your old life of slavery.

He offers you everything your soul will ever need in his new life of freedom.