

Preparation for the Passover

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[0 : 00] How do you prepare your home for visitors to come? Do you do anything when you know visitors are coming?

Do you tidy up, maybe? Move some cushions around? Maybe make the place look a little neater? Now, I know many of us want to say, oh, I do nothing special, you know?

My home's fine. And, you know, visitors must just take me as I am. But despite that, we can't help but have a quick look around, each of us, when we know someone's coming, right?

Quick look around just to make sure we don't have any clothes lying around or dirty breakfast dishes or bowls in the lounge, you know? We can't help but do something in preparation for visitors when we know visitors are coming.

We'll all do something. Now, I want to ask you a different question. How are you preparing for God to come visit? Because He is coming.

[1 : 11] The Bible assures us that He has set a day when He is coming in all His glory, and the skies will be rolled back like a scroll, and the heavenly realities, which up until that point have been invisible, will be made visible and will be revealed, and all people will stop what they're doing, and God will bring perfect justice to this world, and it will be terrifying for anybody who is on the wrong side of Him on that day.

That day is coming. God is coming. We know that. And the biggest mistake any human being can make is to think there's nothing we need to do to prepare for that day. There is.

And it's here in Exodus 12 that we get to see what that looks like, what it looks like to prepare for God to visit. This is the tenth and final plague, and God is sending it because of Pharaoh's continuing hard-hearted refusal to listen to him, and God Himself says, I am going to come down now.

And unlike the other plagues, which were really all just preludes to this final tenth plague, there is now something that even God's own people needed to do to ensure that they were safe when God arrived.

But you know that the judgment that God brought down in Egypt is actually only a small, dim foreshadowing of the judgment that He's going to bring down on all the world one day for humanity's ongoing hard-hearted refusal to listen to Him.

[2 : 50] But even those of us who do listen to God and are here in church this morning still need to do something to prepare for that day.

And we see what that is in this passage because it's the same thing the Israelites needed to do in Egypt. And the first thing is that they needed to do some painting.

Have a look from verse 5. This is Exodus 12, verse 5. Look at the first thing God's people needed to do to prepare for His coming.

You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You are to keep it until the 14th day of the month. Then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight.

They must take some of the blood and paint it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them. And then go forward to verse 12.

[3 : 56] I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the Lord.

I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a sign for you. When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This is a terrifying judgment that God is bringing on an entire nation.

And there is something that His own people need to do to prepare for it. But what struck me, what's really interesting about this is if you were listening carefully, when we read chapter 11 earlier, God already said that He's going to spare the Israelites.

Have a look at verse 7. Against the Israelites where the people are animals, not even a dog will snarl. There will be no threat against them so that you may know the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

[5 : 02] So He's already decided to spare the Israelites like the plagues before, right? The darkness, the livestock. Remember that from the weeks previous? And so if God has already decided to spare the Israelites, why did they still have to paint the blood on their doors?

It's a good question, isn't it? It's a question I was thinking about this week. If God's already decided to spare them and already said He's going to spare them, why did they still need to do something? Why did they still need to paint the blood?

Well, verse 13 tells us, look at it again. The blood on the houses where you're staying will be a sign, look at this, for you. Isn't that interesting? A sign for you.

In other words, this blood that they were to paint on their door was not so much a sign for God. He knew where the Israelites lived. He's omniscient. He knows where they are and who they are.

But it was a sign for them. A sign for you. To tell them something about God's rescue. That's the main purpose of the painting of the blood on the doors.

[6 : 09] To be a sign for His own people, to tell them something about His rescue of them. And what was it to tell them? Well, I think primarily it was to tell them that they don't get saved automatically just because they're Israelites.

God's rescue of them is not going to happen automatically. Even though God is sparing them, they have an active role to play in their own rescue.

In summary, they have to actively embrace the means of rescue that God has provided. Even if they don't fully understand it. And I don't think they did. When God said, you've got to take an animal and paint the blood, they were probably going, what?

Why? That's going to be messy. My lintels look just fine. They probably didn't quite understand, but God wanted them to believe and trust that this was the means of rescue that He's provided.

Now, we know that as the biblical story unfolds, that that does have a very important meaning that becomes clearer later. But for now, He just wanted His people to embrace the means of rescue that He's provided them.

[7 : 17] And they needed to do that. They had an active role to play in that. Like anybody being rescued in any situation, really, you've got an active role to play in your own rescue. Imagine you're drowning out at sea, and the lifeguard comes and says, grab my hand.

You can't just look at Him. You've got to do something. You've got to do what He says, right? You've got to grab His hand. Even though you're not rescuing yourself, and you cannot save yourself if you're being washed out to sea and you've got no strength, when the lifeguard comes and He provides you a means of rescue, you've still got an active role to play, at least to grab on.

And the same goes for how God rescues anyone, ever, from His judgments. It's not automatic. And when God comes again, which He will, when He visits earth to finally and decisively bring ultimate and terrifying justice, which this plague is only a foreshadowing of, nobody's going to be spared automatically just because they went to church or just because they called themselves a Christian.

But only those who have actually actively embraced the means that God has provided, which is His Son, Jesus Christ, who this whole Passover was actually pointing towards because He became the ultimate Passover lamb when He died on the cross.

And all that God is doing here that the Israelites don't fully understand was designed to foreshadow that great moment in, central moment in history where Jesus died on the cross to be the ultimate Passover lamb.

[8 : 57] And this points to Christ because only His blood in all the world, in all that has ever happened in history, only the blood of Jesus, because of who He is, can pay for human sins, can pay for the sins of other people.

And only that blood can therefore be the means by which we are spared from final judgment when God comes. And so no matter what religion you're brought up in, no matter what you think about Jesus, no matter what you've been taught to believe, no matter what the internet teaches you to believe, no matter how good a life you've lived, you will not be spared from God's judgment on the day He comes back unless you have embraced the only means that God has provided, which is His Son, Jesus Christ.

So let me ask you, have you painted the blood on your door? Have you embraced Christ into your life and into your home?

Not just sat there and believed in Him, but embraced and grabbed onto the means that God has provided. Have you embraced Him into your home and into your life as your Savior and your King?

Have you trusted in His death as the only way God's judgment is going to pass over you one day? Have you? Because that is the first and primary way to prepare for the coming of God, to trust in Christ, the means that He has given us to be saved from that judgment before He comes and the only means?

[10 : 34] For God's forgiveness and favor. Have you done that? Do you stand in right relationship with God because of what Christ has done?

Have you put your trust in Him? Because if you do not, if you trust in your own works in any way, if you trust in your own works for God's favor and for His judgment to pass over you one day because of what you did, well then you know what?

He will judge you by your own works and you won't end up well because of that because your works are just not good enough. So the first way to prepare for the coming of God, the same thing that the Israelites needed to do is trust in the means that God has provided, the blood of the Lamb.

Have you done that? Have you painted your door? But there's another way the Israelites had to prepare. I wonder if you spotted it.

Another way they needed to be ready for God to come and that was not just how they painted their house but it's how they dressed. Have a look at verse 11. Here is how you must eat it.

[11 : 42] You must be dressed for travel, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it in a hurry. It is the Lord's Passover.

Now this is a really interesting phrase in verse 11 that's variously translated, dressed for travel, belt tucked into you or whatever, whatever your Bible says.

It's different ways it's translated. The original is actually gird your loins. Have your belt fastened or your loins girded. Now what that meant, that meant in the ancient world where people wore these flowing long, even men wore dresses and it was okay.

I guess we've kind of gone back to that now. Anyway, because in the hot climates they had to wear these long clothes but the problem with that and any woman will know with long dresses, you can't run and do anything active and so what they needed to do, what Israelite men needed to do, or Egyptians as well, is they needed to kind of gather up their long flowing dresses and tuck it in before they could run or fight or do anything useful or active.

They needed to be ready for action. That's what it means to gird up your loins here. That's what it means to fasten your belt, to be ready for action. And why God is saying this now to the Israelites is they needed to be ready to go.

[13 : 07] They needed to be ready to leave because they were leaving Egypt. They were going now and they needed to realize they were leaving Egypt. That's why he tells them, just have everything with you because you're going, you're leaving Egypt, you need to be ready to go.

Now I don't know how long it takes you to be ready to go out when you're leaving your house. How long? It's different people take different amounts of time, right, to get ready to go.

Who is it in your family that you're always waiting for? You know, the stereotype is that it's the woman, right, that the woman needs to get ready and look in the mirror and make sure their hair's okay and stuff.

But actually in our house, it's me. Am I right, Gene? Yeah. Most of the time the family is sitting in the car waiting for me.

And it's not because I'm doing my hair or anything. It's because I don't know where my wallet is. And I don't know where my phone is. And I don't know where my keys are because I don't have a place where, like most people, where you just, a bowl or something.

[14 : 11] I leave them all over. They're all distributed around the house. And every time we have to leave, I dilly-dally right until the last minute. And then I'm suddenly looking for all my stuff. I'm not a very good example of what the Israelites had to be here, right?

They had to be ready to go. They had to have all the stuff they needed to leave, ready to go at a moment's notice because they were leaving Egypt and they needed to be ready for where they were going. Now there's a deeper sense here as well.

It's not just a practical thing God wanted them to have their stuff with them. The deeper sense of why he tells them this is they had to make sure they were no longer attached to Egypt.

They had to make sure there was nothing holding them back. They had to be ready to leave it, not just practically, but in their mind and in their heart, they had to be ready to leave it.

And if you think about it, it would have been hard for them. Even though they were slaves, this is all they knew. Egypt was all they knew. And so for God to tell them this, they knew what it meant.

[15 : 12] It meant they needed to be ready to leave and they needed to come to terms with the fact that they were leaving Egypt and they were going somewhere that they'd never been before. It's all that they had been used to.

They needed to be though, and so do we. We need to be ready. We need to gird up our loins in a way.

We need to tuck our belt in. We need to gather all the stuff that we have. Just as they needed to be ready, so do we if we're going to be ready when God comes, if we're going to be ready for God's ultimate arrival.

We need to, in other words, not be attached to this world that he's coming to judge. We need to learn how to not be attached to this world.

And we need to be living for where we're going rather than where we are. That's exactly, in fact, what Peter writes to Christians in his letter that Kaylee read some of us, some of it for us earlier.

[16 : 17] You can turn to one Peter because we'll spend the rest of our time here because this is really the same command as God gave to the Israelites to be ready to have the staff in their hand, to be ready to leave Egypt.

Peter is applying it here to Christians. And he says this in 1 Peter 1 verse 13. Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The revelation of Jesus Christ. This is when God comes and he has entrusted judgment of the world to his son Jesus. At the revelation of Jesus Christ, the day that God comes back, what must you do in preparation?

Well, you must have your minds ready for action. Now, what's interesting about that, again, variously translated in different English translations, Peter is using exactly the same phrase as God used to prepare the Israelites to gird up their loins.

He's literally saying here, in the original, he's saying, gird up the loins of your mind. Live for where you are going.

[17 : 30] Get ready to leave. Be always ready. Don't be attached to where you are. Live for where you're going, not where you are. Otherwise, you won't be ready when God comes. That's what he's saying here.

And so how do you do that? If that is the primary way, besides painting the blood, which is trusting in Christ alone, and then being ready to leave, being ready, living for where we're going, not where we are, what does that look like?

How do we do that? Well, Peter goes on to tell you in the next few verses. 1 Peter 1 verse 14. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.

But as the one who called you is holy, this is how you are to do it, you are also to be holy in all your conduct. For it is written, be holy, because I am holy.

If we're going to be where God is in the restored creation, we've got to be like God is. We've got to live lives fit for where we're going, if we're going there, right?

[18 : 42] You're only truly ready for God to arrive and to go into His restored world if you're living a life that is fit for it. If you're living a life that is different to the world that you're leaving, a life that is marked by holiness in your life.

Peter's quite clear on that. That's how to get ready. Learn to live holy lives. Put off sin and self-indulgence that this world glorifies.

Because where the restored world is, where we're going, it has none of that. And so our lives should constantly, actively be lives that are putting off the things that are not fit for the world to come.

That is what it means to do the same things the Israelites did and be ready to leave this world. Is to now already start putting off the things of this world that don't fit in where we're going.

Holiness of life. The putting off of sin. You know what? I think that is something many Christians don't take seriously enough. I don't think many Christians take holiness seriously enough because we misunderstand the doctrine of salvation by faith alone that we forget that the Bible also says without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

[20 : 02] Hebrews 12 verse 14. In the same book that we read earlier that tells us all about Christ as our high priest and the effective sacrifice for us, that same book also says without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

We're not saved by our holiness, but we are saved for holiness. And if you have little desire to seriously put off sin and have strategies in your life to put off sin, if you have little desire to put off sin and live for where you are going, it's probably an indicator that you're not going there.

If you're still happy living in Egypt, it's probably because you're an Egyptian. But the true people of God are those who are actively preparing for His arrival.

Those are the true people of God, just as they were in Egypt. By embracing tightly the only means of rescue that He has provided us, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, painting our daily lives in His blood every day, knowing that we stand in God's favor only because of what Jesus did on the cross.

And we will stand in His favor on that day only because of what Jesus did on the cross. Relying on Christ daily, clinging to Him, painting our daily lives in His blood.

[21 : 27] And then by being dressed, ready for travel, living a life that is appropriate for where we're going, not where we are. And so I encourage you in light of what we've learned this morning from Exodus 12.

I encourage you to actually go home, read through 1 Peter chapter 1, and genuinely, in the quiet of your heart, with no one else around, ask yourself, are you ready for God to come?

Let's pray that that would be the case. Lord, your word is powerful. It makes us uncomfortable. But it is true.

And it is what we need to know. And Lord, we thank you that just as you prepared your people, the Israelites, for your visiting Egypt in judgment, that you have prepared your people today through a very clear testimony of the only means of salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ, and how you have proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that He is the only means through His resurrection, and you have proven that He is coming back.

And Lord, we pray that you would help us to all make sure that we are ready for that day by having truly embraced Him in our lives and by seeking to live the lives that we are going to live one day.

[23 : 03] Lord, we pray that you would help us, strengthen us by your Spirit to put off sin and to live for where we're going, not where we are. And we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.