

Exod 03-07-20b

In Exodus chapter 13, we have seen the first two memorial things that God has instituted. We could slow down and do detailed studies of each of these details, but it would be well into the millennium before we finished Exodus. I think the main point here is that God wants Israel to remember three things.

The first is signified in the Passover observance, and that is that sacrifice was necessary to accomplish deliverance from judgment on sin. He didn't say put an olive branch on your door. He didn't say light a fire.

It only takes a spark to get a candle glowing or something. It had to be blood on the doorpost to secure deliverance from the judgment of sin. And that is something that we should constantly be mindful of.

We are not our own. We were bought with a price. It was a sacrifice.

If God wanted to emphasize the grace and the free availability, he would have said go cut a branch of a tree or bring in a sprig of wheat and attach to your door because that would say, well, anyone can do that. You don't have to have money to get a branch. But that's not the point.

To find a lamb and ensure that it was without blemish and then slay the lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorpost signifies that this comes at a cost and it is a great cost and it is by God's righteousness because that blood propitiates the justice of the Father. It is right to acknowledge the perfection of that sacrifice and grant deliverance to those who claim it. That is memorial observance number one.

Number two is as someone who has been delivered from judgment, as someone who has been redeemed and purchased out of bondage, the people of God are to live a separated and distinguished life. What is it distinguished by? It's distinguished by the purging out of the old leaven. Unleavened bread, the corruption that is associated with the old life is removed.

Now this has practical application for us. No matter how long we have been saved, there are aspects of our life that partake of the old regime, of the old environment and it is exceedingly difficult in our culture and in our society to get, as they used to say out in the country, to get shed of these accouterments and these holdovers and these parts of the old life. We are immersed in a culture that extols a godless existence that prioritizes personal satisfaction and personal pleasure and personal stimulation.

This is why the entertainment industry claims most of the discretionary spending for people after you pay your bills and buy your groceries, what does the rest of our money go for? Entertainment. Whether it's music or movies or amusement parks or whatever it might be, we basically go out after we've had our fundamental needs met and we say, amuse me. Center

your attention on me.

This is why celebrities are extolled. Many of you I know have read books from the centuries gone by where actors were looked down upon and a woman would be horrified if her daughter wanted to run off with an actor because they're just the lowest form of life, these vaudevillians, these hat and cane, buck and wing men, how could you go off with an actor of all things? But of course in our day, because now the work ethic and the value of integrity and being a self-made man and working one's way up is set aside in favor of the overnight sensation and I went on American Idol and became a star because I could sing a high note and so on. All goes back to the idea that when we separate ourselves, we want to put those things in perspective.

We don't have to eschew and deny and get away from all entertainment. Entertainment is a wonderful thing in its place, just like different kinds of food are wonderful in their place, different activities are wonderful in their place, but if they crowd out and supersede and take center stage where God belongs and where the word of God belongs and where our dedication to Christ and to God the Father belong, then they become an evil and you can take anything and turn it into an evil. You can decide that you love chess and you want to play chess and it begins to crowd out other things like sitting down and paying your bills or spending time with your family or going to your job.

Now there are people who have even taken Bible study and abused it, people who cart their Bible down to work and want to read on company time and want to talk to other people on company time. You can take anything and abuse it by taking it out of its place and out of its shelf in the priority cabinet. Well, the idea of the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread was, and what it communicates to us is, we need to look at our lives, we need to look at the way we live and say, am I carrying forward baggage from the ways of the world that is sidelining and elbowing out of the way my proper spiritual priorities? How do we make that evaluation? We can say, oh my goodness, I live in the world, I do things all day long, how do I know? Well, we have very simple criteria.

First of all, we want to be sure that God the Holy Spirit is able to be heard in our soul by acknowledging our sins and recognizing His importance in our souls and in our thinking. Just like we do before Bible class, if I'm going to sit down and judge my life, if I'm going to pause and meditate and say, now, let me just ask myself before I go any further down the road here, how am I going to be judged when the Lord comes back? When He looks at this day, when He looks at what's going on in my life right now, what is He going to say? Well, if I want to know what God thinks, if I want to know how He's going to judge the thoughts and intents of my heart, I need to look at myself and my life in the light of His Word under the ministry of His Spirit. So I would stop and acknowledge, just as we do before Bible class, the role of God's Holy Spirit.

And in the act of asking for that ministry, recognizing that God has granted it to those who ask and seek and knock, then I would try to remember the Word of God that I have studied and the

priorities that it establishes, that it is the glory of God that is at issue, that I am not my own, I am bought with a price, and try to remember the concrete things that God's Word teaches. I don't know some of the things that face me. I don't know the answer to the question.

Should I change jobs? Should I change houses? Should I accept or reject different opportunities that come my way? But there are things that are rock-solid priorities in God's Word. I know that I am commanded to be a good husband to my wife. I am commanded to be a good father to my children.

I am commanded to honor God in all that I do, and do whatever I do, as though I were doing it for Him, and not for the people who may be issuing instructions. So when I go down to work, and I have things that need to be done at work, I don't say, well, I don't know if I'm going to do that or not, because this person kind of has my nose out of joint today, and I think I'll just put that on the back burner. If I have a responsibility at work, it is as though God has said, would you do this? And I say, yes I will, and I try to be faithful and consistent, and do the very best job I can at all times, because it is as though this computer I'm fixing, or this sermon I'm digitizing, or this transcript I'm editing, or whatever the details of your tasks may be, if I was turning this in to the Lord, would I consider it good enough? Have I worked hard enough on it? Have I done a justifiable amount of labor and attention to this task, to turn it in to the Lord? If not, then I'm not doing what I do heartily as unto the Lord.

And looking at our life from the standpoint of the Word of God, recognizing that there will come a day when every thought, every word, every intent of the heart is going to be brought before God, and He's going to say, why did you do that? What was your thought process? How did you arrive at the decision to do this, or to not do that? And we don't have to agonize and spend hours and hours in spiritual navel contemplation, but what we do need to do is analyze ourselves from time to time. The Bible says if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. This is sort of like, do you want to grade your own paper, or do you want to turn it in to somebody else to grade? Even knowing that the score should be the same either way, I like to grade my own paper and see exactly how I messed up and learn from my mistakes.

What I dislike about some of the standardized tests that you take to go to college and so on, or for certification in computers and to get different letters after your name in computers, is you take the test, but you don't find out the ones you missed. They don't come back and say, well, you missed question 23. You chose answer A, and the right answer was answer C. They say, well, you failed this section.

You've got to retake the test, but we're not going to tell you why. You just need to go back and study the whole thing. I don't like that.

If I make a mistake, I want to know exactly what it is so I can correct whatever malware was going on in my head when I arrived at that conclusion. Anyway, judge ourselves, we would not be judged. The memorials that God is giving Israel here to remember the Passover, remember that you're bought with a price, remember that you are to live a separated and dedicated life

that gets rid of the old baggage.

We look at our lives and we say, am I carrying old baggage? Am I allowing something to intrude itself? Here's one that can, you know, this is an easy one to say because I know it steps on everybody's toes, including my own. Do I spend too much time watching television? Am I going to wish at some future point that when the total or some angel sitting there on an adding machine totaling up all the time I spent watching television, he says, well, Sam, you spent 117,343 hours watching television. And of course, two thirds of that was commercials.

And then I think, look at all the hours of my life where I vegetated saying to a little box with a picture on the front, entertain me, tell me a story, while away my time. That's 117,000 hours that I could have been investing in the eternal future. And not to say that all television watching is bad, but you can watch television and have it be constructive.

You can learn things. You can analyze the culture. If you do it right, it can be a productive enterprise.

But I don't think that an average of three to four hours a day can be made productive. I think there's only so much. It's kind of like watching Christian television.

A little bit of it goes a long way. You can get the point and get the benefit in a fairly short amount of time and then go do something instructive. Well, this is the kind of analysis we have to do.

The Israelites were to search their house and find any leaven. In fact, in later days, they made a game of this. Grandma would hide some leaven somewhere in the house, and the children, before the Feast of Unleavened Bread, would have to find it.

Kind of a hide-and-seek kind of a thing. Treasure hunt sort of thing. And they would find it and cast it out and purge the house.

Well, we need to make this kind of search. Search diligently and expunge, because this is what is going to come back and hurt us at the judgment. We're going to say, you know, I never did get a handle on that spending hours and hours online or spending hours and hours in whatever it might be.

Playing video games, watching TV, working on my car, reading books that have no redeeming social value, reading to boxcar kids or whatever. At any rate, I think those books have no redeeming social value. Just my personal opinion.

Purge out the leaven. Well, now we come to chapter 13. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Consecrate to me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast.

God says, It is mine. So Moses said to the people, Remember this day in which you went out of

Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for by strength of hand... We've seen this phrase other places. By a mighty hand, a strong arm, God delivered.

But this is particularly emphatic. The way this is constructed in Hebrew, the word mighty comes ahead of the word hand. Normally you have yad, which is the word for hand, and then you have chazak, which is the word for strong, coming after it as a genitive.

Hand of strength. Here, the word for strong comes first, and it's very emphatic. Moses says, You need to remember this day.

It's the power of God that brought you out. Don't be thinking back and saying, You know, we outwitted the Egyptians. We had a fortunate set of circumstances.

The weather conspired to weaken them so that we could leave. God says, It is by my mighty hand brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

On this day you were going out in the month Abib. Abib was the month of things turning green. It was the spring month, the month of renewal in the ancient world.

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. I want to stop and just say a quick thing about land flowing with milk and honey. This is a very oft-repeated description of Canaan.

Why a land flowing with milk and honey? Why not a land of big grapes and huge crops? The interesting thing about that phrase is when it says a land flowing with milk, in order for there to be abundant milk, you have to have healthy cattle and healthy goats. And in order for them to be healthy, you have to have rich pasturage. And you have to have peace where you do not have enemies coming in and scattering your flocks and herds or taking them away.

And so when it says flowing with milk, it implies a land that is peaceful, a land that is agriculturally abundant. And it says it's also flowing with honey. Milk is one of the staples of the land.

You have bread and you have milk. These are the staples. If you have bread and milk, you can live.

But flowing with honey, for there to be abundant honey, what do you have to have? Great agricultural conditions, but in this case, it's not the crops. Bees visit flowers. These are the wild flowers and the agriculture that goes beyond the necessities.

The flowers ornament and beautify the hills. And the bees go and visit these flowers. They go back and build their combs and their dwelling places and produce the honey.

But honey is a luxury. Honey is not a staple. It is a wonderful delicacy.

And so a land flowing with milk says you're going to have everything in terms of necessities in abundance. A land flowing with honey says you're also going to have beauty. You're going to have luxuries.

You're going to have blessings above and beyond the necessities. Does that make sense? Honey speaks of the flowers, of the springtime, the bees, wonderful pastoral scenes of peace and plenty for necessities and for luxuries. So God says he's going to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

You shall keep this service in this month. And what does he say? Don't forget as you enjoy prosperity and as you enjoy blessing, don't forget what it is based on. Don't forget what you came from.

Don't lose sight of the fact that every good and perfect gift comes down from above. Every good and perfect gift, whether it is provision, whether it is blessing and prosperity, comes from God. It is God who brought you out of the land of Egypt with his mighty hand.

It is God who effected the sacrifice that preserved you from judgment and delivered you from bondage. It is God that you honor when you purge the leaven out of your house and put away the things of Egypt. Put away what might hold over from the old life.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day there shall be a feast of the Lord. You begin with a feast of the Lord and you end with a feast of the Lord. And what this implies is if you begin looking at God and you end up looking at God, then through the whole seven days you should be looking at God.

And once again, the bread and the seven day span speaks of a pure life. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days, no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. Hunt it down, throw it out.

You shall tell your son in that day, saying this is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt. Remember our scripture reading in Psalm 71. David says I want to declare your righteousness.

I want to declare your faithfulness to the coming generations. Tell your son it will be a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes that the Lord's law may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.

Now this statement here and a few other places led to the practice of making and wearing phylacteries. A phylactery is a little bag, a little baglet with a strap. And they would actually, and orthodox Jews still do this today, strap the thing to their head and strap it to their hand.

And they've got a particular way, just like on a Marine Corps sword, if you see the Mameluke sword, there's a particular way that that knot is to be tied in the leather tassel. And if it's tied any other way it's wrong. Well, the Jews have a particular number of wraps and a particular way

that the leather strap is supposed to overlap.

And if you look at a picture sometime of a Jewish man with a phylactery, they're always wound exactly the same way. It's kind of the gematria, the symbolism of numbers, where they've added a bunch of baggage to the idea that it should be bound on the hand. What is he talking about here? He's not talking about a literal piece of scripture, a scrap of parchment or something would have this tiny scripture written on it and put it in this baglet and then they would tie it to their hand or tie it between their eyes and they put it in the doorposts of their houses.

The little, you see those even today, you can buy them in the Biblical Archaeological Society's catalog, little brass things to go in your doorposts. The idea is, because the one thing they don't do, it says that the Lord's law may be in your mouth. Well, how are you going to do that? Are you going to get a, like a Tootsie Roll and have a little roll of paper inside and carry that around? I mean, it ought to be clear.

You can go to Proverbs where it says, bind these on your neck, write them on the tables of your heart. Well, gracious sakes, we don't do open heart surgery and stick something in. It is symbolic.

To keep it between your eyes means everywhere you look, you're judging and evaluating in the light of God's law. When you have it bound on your hand, any time you set your hand to do something, you put your hand to the plow, you reach out to perform a task, you're thinking about the law of God. So, what you see, you evaluate in the light of God's word.

What you do, you evaluate in the light of God's word. What you say, you evaluate in the light of God's word. That's the idea.

And that is just as true for us as it was to them. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year. When you come into the land, verse 12, you will set apart to the Lord all that open the womb.

That is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have. The males shall be the Lord's. Female animals are excluded.

Female offspring, daughters, are excluded. It is the males who are dedicated. Now, why is that? Why wouldn't it be males and females? Are they not equal in God's sight? They are, but it is the... I mean, there are some benefits to this as well, because the sacrifices are always going to be male.

The sacrifices are always going to be a bull or a he-goat from the flock. What I had not thought of when we went through Genesis, and went through Genesis 15, and God confirms the promise to Abraham, and he begins in the morning and he says, take a three-year-old heifer and a three-year-old she-goat and another three-year-old animal, and divide them down the middle, and then take the birds, and then he sits there all day keeping the buzzards away, and

then that night God comes and walks between the pieces. That was a very unusual sacrifice, because in the Levitical law, it is always a male animal.

But in the confirming of the covenant to Abraham, it is a she-goat, and it is a heifer, a female cow, that is divided, and that God walks between the pieces. What does that mean? Well, since I just now realized it, I haven't figured it out yet, but I'll let you know. But it is an observation, and when I come across something like that, then I've got to go dig and dig and dig and figure out why is it that God specified female animals.

Two of the three are female in Genesis 15. I don't know why yet, but as soon as I figure it out, I'll let you know. So here, set apart the firstborn male that opens the womb, animals and sons.

Now, this is not to be sacrificed. This is to be dedicated to God. It shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, what is this? You shall say to him, by strength of hand, and once again, we have that very emphatic language, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

It came about when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go. The Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.

It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt. Notice, the dedication of the firstborn is also to be a sign on the hand and frontlets between the eyes. How do you bind a practice and a custom onto your hand? It is obviously figurative.

Now, what does this all mean? Well, it is a reminder. And this goes not just year by year for Passover, and not just once a year during a week of unleavened bread, but any time there is an animal born, any time there is a son born, how often does that happen? Well, if you get a room full of people, you've got birthdays scattered through all 12 months, don't you? There are forever people being born every single day. And so, as soon as a family has a new firstborn son, this kicks into effect.

It is going to be a reminder week by week. In a large nation like Israel, there is always going to be a new couple having their firstborn son, and they go back to this practice. He is to be dedicated to the Lord.

What does this say about 1 Samuel 1 and 2? What does Hannah do? She has a firstborn son, and she takes him to Shiloh and dedicates him to the Lord. She didn't just make that up. She told God, I will be faithful to what the law of Moses says.

I will be faithful to the very first set of memorials that we were given as a nation. And you get the idea that this had fallen out of use and fallen out of practice in Israel when Hannah takes her firstborn son and dedicates him to the Lord, which was the law. It will be a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes.

The firstborn son is the one who inherits. The firstborn son is the one who represents the ongoing leadership in the family. And he is to be dedicated to the Lord.

What does this communicate? The leadership, the policy, the future of our lives, of our families, should be dedicated to the Lord. We remember where we came from. We remember who we are and why we're here.

You don't have to do it for every single animal and every single person in the household. Why the firstborn? Because the firstborn is the hope. The firstborn is where you put most of your eggs in that basket.

This is where the inheritance goes. This is where the double portion goes. This is where the family priesthood always went.

This is the leadership and the authority. And the direction that a nation takes is going to be based on what the firstborn do. And it is also oddly prophetic because if the firstborn screws up, which is so often the case, then it's going to be the younger son that has to take up the slack.

Ishmael malfunctioned. It's Isaac who comes to the fore. Esau forsook his birthright.

And Jacob comes to the fore. Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob, went up to his father's couch, slept with his concubine. And so the leadership goes down to Judah and the double portion goes all the way down to Joseph and the priesthood goes down to Levi.

Reuben lost all of the accouterments of his firstborn status. What does God say about Israel? Israel is my firstborn son, He says to Pharaoh way back in chapter 3 or 4 here of Exodus. Israel is my firstborn son.

What's going to happen if Israel does not dedicate itself to God? God's going to turn to a younger sibling, and that's us. Why did God stop the clock for Israel after the time of Christ? They missed their heritage. They missed their inheritance.

And God says, I'm going to take it from you and give it to a people who bear the fruits thereof. Well, that's us. We are connected with God's only begotten Son, His firstborn out from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we have an obligation to not make the mistake that you see so often in the Scripture of the firstborn son missing it. But to do that, we've got to practice remembrance. Practice these memorials.

Remember that it is Christ who purchased us with His own precious blood. Remember that we are to purge out the leaven of sin and evil practice in our lives. And remember the dedication of the firstborn.

We are united with Christ. We have been baptized into Christ. He is the firstborn of all creation.

Romans 8.29 Whom He foreknew, then He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brethren. We are identified and associated with the firstborn. And we have that responsibility to be dedicated to God.

So it came to pass, Pharaoh let the people go. He did not lead them by the way of the Philistines. He instead leads them a different direction.

That was the near way. That was the shortest way to get to Canaan. But he didn't take them that way.

Why? God said, lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt. God nurtures the infant nation of Israel and does not bring them into a conflict that they are not strong enough to bear. There is no temptation befalling you, but such as is common to man.

God will not test us beyond what we are able to bear. Israel could not have... They've been slaves for 215 or nearly 200 years in Egypt. They've been in Egypt for 215 years and they've been slaves for the better part of that time.

They're not ready to go out and go forth into battle. Most of them probably don't even own a sword. Egypt probably didn't let the slaves own swords.

I wouldn't if I had slaves. So they're not ready for that. They're not psychologically prepared for it.

They're not spiritually prepared for it. So God does not lead them into conflict. And this is a great manifestation of God's love.

And He does the same for us. If we are facing a conflict, it is only because God knows that we have the equipment to face it. We have what it takes to endure it, to pass the test, to conquer the enemy, to move valiantly forward in victory.

Otherwise, we wouldn't be facing it. God does not let us face something we cannot bear. So, He took them by a different way.

He led them around the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. They went up in orderly ranks, it says, out of the land of Egypt. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.

He had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, God will surely visit you. I carry up my bones from here with you. Fulfillment of the promise.

That's what this chapter is about. Why do you have these memorials, these three memorials? Remember that God has fulfilled His promise. The bones of Joseph, every time you see them, what does it say? Joseph said, I'm telling you God's going to fulfill His promise.

And here they go. He says, God's going to fulfill it, and then you'll carry me back to be buried in

Shechem. And that's what they're going to do.

Well, God has kept His promises to us. It should motivate us to be faithful, to keep our commitment to Him. To judge ourselves, purge out the leaven, remember where we have come from, and remember where we are going.

Well, this is a good place for us to stop. We're going to pick up next time in the tail end of this chapter looking at the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. There's more to that than meets the eye, so to speak.

And we're also going to take a quick look at the Scriptures pertaining to the length of time that Israel spent in the sojourn in Egypt. As I just mentioned, they were 215 years in Egypt. You find passages that say 400 years, 430 years.

What is that all about? We'll resolve that, at least to my satisfaction, next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank You that You have given us these graphic and vivid reminders of our standing before You, our standing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what is both an opportunity and an obligation for us to dedicate ourselves to live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight.

We pray that these truths will be a motivating influence on us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts, help us to live and choose and speak in a way that is pleasing in Your sight, glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in His name.

Amen.