



**Series: Exodus: Out of Egypt**

**Date: May 22, 2022**

**Speaker: Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor**

**Text: Exodus 12:29-51**

**Title: God the Judge, God the Provider, God the Merciful**

#### Member Meeting Plug

Ok today we are in Exodus Chapter 12. This is our final sermon in our exodus series. And this has been an incredible time in God's word for our church. I told you at the beginning that Exodus is going to put a truth front and center for us. That the most important thing in your life is what you think about God. And as we've seen more of God, we have been changed by him. People gave their lives to Christ, people have been baptized, people have taken steps of repentance & reconciliation in broken relationships. People have shared the gospel with their

friends and some of you are even considering full time missions work. It has been an incredible 3 months.

And this whole series has been BUILDING to today. After all the book is called "exodus" but this whole time we've been in it...the people of God are still in Egypt. They haven't exited yet. Well, that's what we get to see today.

Finally, the people of God are heading out. And I have to warn you. Today, what you think about God will be pressed to the greatest limit yet in our series. Because you will be confronted with the same God doing 3 different things that could really stretch your view of God. In our passage We will see God being a judge, God being a provider, and God being merciful to the outsider.

And I'm telling you the God of the bible is all three & they do not contradict one another. And pretty much every person who is on a journey to try and get to know the God of the bible will have trouble with one of these or maybe all of them. **In fact, there are entire brands of Christianity that will cater exclusively to one of these three aspects of God.** Make God look the way we want him to look. For some God is always the righteous judge reigning down the fire of his wrath on the deserving



sinners of the world. For some God is the provider who is just waiting to prosper you if you will just believe. And for some he's mainly the God of love. God is love man. He's not angry with you, he LOVES you. He's not going to punish you, he LOVES you. Just like you are!

Say em one after the other you realize our modern day can be a little like dinner at Ricky Bobby's house. Now the problem is all 3 of these brands of Christianity can cite a bible verse to back up their claims. And all I can offer to you today is the that one true God will not be confined to how we brand him. Maybe he's shattered some of your categories recently. I hope so. I'm going to show you just 3 aspects of God today. The 3 on display in the exodus. I'm going to try and answer some questions. And show you how all 3 display the glory of God. And then call you to your next step in light of who God is. God the Judge, God the Provider, and God the Merciful. **And the thread that ties them all together - He is displaying HIS GLORY in our world SO THAT we can know the one true God.**

Now I must warn you. We begin with God the judge. And it is not pleasant. We are picking up right where we left off last week. God announced a 10th plague would come

on Pharaoh: The death of all the firstborn sons of Egypt. And it doesn't matter your social standing. There are no economic classes when it comes to your standing before God. We said it last week. God has family & he has enemies. No middle ground. And regardless of whether you are a son of Pharaoh or of a prisoner you have equal standing before God. And an equal opportunity to be spared judgment - the blood of the lamb.

In fact, several weeks ago before we got into the plagues God told Moses to warn pharaoh that this is where things were headed.

*2 And you will say to Pharaoh: This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son. 23 I told you: Let my son go so that he may worship me, but you refused to let him go. Look, I am about to kill your firstborn son!" -- Exodus 4:22-23*

Pharaoh hasn't listened. In fact, Moses stormed out ANGRY after announcing this plague to hard hearted Pharaoh because he knew it meant death to so many. And now the 10th plague is here.

**29 Now at midnight the Lord struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who**



sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. **30** During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn't a house without someone dead.

Speak to the context and then to how it lands on us. Our narrative is coming full circle. Remember what Pharaoh did in Exodus 1? A different pharaoh yes, but nonetheless - Pharaoh ordered all the sons of Israel to be killed. So, the Egyptians obeyed him and went and threw a generation of baby boys into the Nile. *What's interesting here though is that God does not tell Israel to pick up the sword in this case. He himself executes vengeance. And it becomes a theme for God's people. Yes, sometimes he calls them to go to war. But, unlike any other army in history - God often tells his people to assemble for battle...and then he fights the battle while they stand there. Those frequent occurrences are to remind them that vengeance is HIS (Romans 12.19 & Deuteronomy 32.35).*

**31** He summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and said, "Get out immediately from among my people, both you and the Israelites, and go, worship the Lord as you

have said. **32** Take even your flocks and your herds as you asked and leave, and also bless me."

As God said, this is the plague that breaks Pharaoh. In fact, it breaks him so much he moves from being in opposition to this God of Moses to saying as you leave...I want you to bless me. I want your God that I have rejected and fought for so long..to bless me. There is a shift that has happened in Pharaoh. It's only temporary. Maybe brought on by the wave of grief. And the last time a Pharaoh had received a blessing from an Israelite - Was when Jacob blessed Pharaoh's house as the people of God came to live in Egypt 430 years ago (Genesis 47.7,10). This request for a blessing (we do not know if Moses did it) by an Egyptian King to an Israelite Leader is the symbolic bookend to their time in Egypt. It's time to go.

**33** Now the Egyptians pressured the people in order to send them quickly out of the country, for they said, "We're all going to die!"

Makes sense, right? Hysteria is filling the whole region. In the middle of the night. Wailing through the whole region. Some scholars say families who had heard the announcement of this plague were likely awake watching



their children. Keeping them awake. Can you imagine this? If you've never been in the room when a child dies, I do not wish it on you. It's haunting. It is the worst feeling in the world. Ya'll this is a difficult plague. They are wondering what is next. They've got to get them out as fast as they can. This is crazy.

**34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their clothes on their shoulders.**

This is why unleavened bread became so important to the Passover observance. Because it is the bread of remembrance.

### **GOD THE JUDGE - Are plagues cruel?**

Ok let's talk for a second about this 10th plague. It's difficult, isn't it? Tragic. Verse 29 is WHY many skeptics struggle to believe. Why would this God that you claim to be loving...kill children? Why would he be so...cruel. And can the Christians in the room be honest for a second? This one is hard for a lot of us too. We do not ever apologize for scripture. Ever. But we are all still working out our faith with fear and trembling. So, I just want to say to you Christian if you struggle with this, you don't

have to be ashamed. But I do encourage you do not shy away from this moment. In fact - lean in and seek God. Here's what I'll say that I hope helps us understand the 10th plague a little more

1. **God is good, even in judgment.** Calling God cruel is ascribing motive to him. The atheist who claims this is evidence that the God of the bible is cruel - Is claiming that God delights in this. That he enjoys the suffering of his creation. To claim this is to claim to know the very mind of God, ascribing to Him the attitudes of indifference and/or sadistic pleasure necessary to define Him as cruel. This isn't thoughtfulness. It's pride. To say God is CRUEL is to leave no room for him to be both a Judge and Good. The scriptures tell us he is good. Job lost all that he had at God's very clear awareness. And yet he worshiped God as good. God does not owe us explanation. And that is the hardest thing of all. The longer I walk with God: the more I am able to say with Job - The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. **Job 1.21.** And I promise you



won't develop that faith in the moment. You need to develop that faith NOW. Otherwise, it won't be there when a hard moment comes. A hitter doesn't learn to hit a curveball in the world series. He learns it in practice. In reps without pressure.

See we actually crave God's judgment over sin. We just look at this and say...God killed innocent people. Who says they are innocent? We don't know their hearts or actions. And that's the point. And before you say yeah but even one innocent child...Let me remind you all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

2. **We answer to God, he does not answer to us.**

This is the hardest one I have to say this morning. But some will never let this go until they have 100% clear rational understanding that meets THEIR ethical approval standard. And I need you to hear Romans 9

**20 On the contrary, who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Will what be formed say to**

**the one who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?" 21 Or has the potter no right over the clay, to make from the same lump one piece of pottery for honor and another for dishonor? 22 -- Romans 9:20-22**

The hard truth is - you want God to answer to you and that's the very thing Satan himself did in the throne room of God. God does provide answers. BUT be careful to demand he answer to you. Lest you find yourself in the same position as Pharaoh.

3. **The fate of a people follows the decisions of its leaders.**

This has been true since the dawn of civilization. This is why I pray that God raises some of you up for public leadership. Because I believe his wisdom is best for our nation. The pulpit is not for that, but God may call you for it. But Pharaoh turned from God. And God brought judgment on the people. **Think about how resistant Pharaoh had been.** A loss of life in the family of the king alone—or even in the household



of his aristocracy—would scarcely have sufficed to compel Egypt to grant a release of the entire Israelite nation and all its cattle. Nothing short of an all-inclusive calamity visited on the entire people would serve to bring about the deliverance of God’s people from the bondage they had suffered in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

4. **This plague was the final defeat of the gods of Egypt.** Life in Egypt was very good - good climate, a predictable water source in the Nile, and fertile soil brought down by the floods. To them the greatest good was the continuation of such a life. And in the end, it was for the perpetuation of that life that they worshiped their myriad gods. But Yahweh had shown them in case after case that these so-called gods did not have the secret of

life and that in fact, they could only produce death. **Thus, this final plague is an attack on life itself.** Even life, when lived apart from the one true God, does not have life in itself. It is a gift from the sole creator of the earth, and that creator is Yahweh of Israel. How humbling this must have been to intelligent, cultured, and sophisticated Egyptians, that the simple Hebrew slaves had found God without looking for him, while they with all their careful searching had found nothing but death.<sup>2</sup> And what a warning to us lest we worship the life we have instead of the one who gave it to us.

5. **Lastly - If Jesus didn't get out of the grave, it doesn't matter.** I just want to make sure we don't lose sight of what matters MOST. See on the

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<sup>1</sup> Gleason L. Archer, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Zondervan’s Understand the Bible Reference Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 113–114.

<sup>2</sup> Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Genesis, Exodus*, vol. 1 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 368.



cross the Judge looked at your sin and mine and he did NOT strike us who deserved it. Instead, the same God...who we vividly see DOES judge sin...struck his firstborn son. Himself. So that we would be spared this penalty. The purpose of the 10th plague being in scripture is to alert you to God's righteous judgment that should humble you. And then to fill your heart with worship that God spared you.

And what if God, wanting to display his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And what if he did this to make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory — 24 on us, the ones he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? -- Romans 9:22-24

And three days after he died Jesus rose from the dead. None of the Egyptian sons did. No one else ever did. But Jesus did. And in doing that he unequivocally demonstrated he is God. So as hard

as this judgment may be...Look at it through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And make sure you believe THAT. Because if you don't, well the exodus doesn't really matter.

**35 The Israelites acted on Moses's word and asked the Egyptians for silver and gold items and for clothing. 36 And the Lord gave the people such favor with the Egyptians that they gave them what they requested. In this way they plundered the Egyptians.**

Ok here we turn to God the provider. He's a judge. But also, a provider. Let's talk about this wealth God gave them for a second. Because if we don't, we run the risk of this text becoming a prosperity gospel text. HEY, follow God & he will give you that gold one day. Or some garbage like that. But if we follow the story of exodus, we see this gold & silver comes up a couple more times in Exodus.

I think it's fair to say that God gave this to them. Correct? God told them to ask for it. A bizarre and specific ask. And they gave it to them. Their newfound wealth was unmistakably God's PROVISION for them even though God didn't rain it down from heaven or something. And I



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say that because whatever wealth you have now - it is a gift to you from God. I'm not sure what means he used. Maybe he's given you education & intelligence. Maybe you come from wealth. Maybe it's just been through hard work & good decisions. However, you got it - I know though is there were so many circumstances outside of your control that played a part in it. And I know from scripture that God is the one who has been in control of your whole life. And so, it would be foolish to say anything other than the truth that everything you have...God gave it to you. And in fact, scripture is going to go even further to say everything you have...belongs to God. You aren't the owner of it. You are a steward of it. And we are going to see this provision of wealth used for good and for evil by the Israelites on their journey in the wilderness.

They will use it for good when they use it to buy the supplies needed to live in the wilderness from merchants. They use this wealth to build the tabernacle God instructs them to build. That's God's dwelling place. And God blesses them as they build it, and he comes and dwells among them in this very precise tent worthy of the dwelling of God made possible by the wealth God gave them. **See the purpose of the wealth was for God's**

**glory.** It wasn't just for them. It was for God to be given glory among them. God came and dwelt among them.

But then, in a moment where they start to doubt God, this PROVISION of wealth becomes the very thing they use to create a false idol to worship. They literally melt their gold and turn it into a statue & worship it. And listen I need to be your pastor right here which means I'm about to say something that you won't like.

Listen up - before you think you are beyond crafting idols out of your gold, just remember we take our gold and use it to fund all kinds of recreational idolatry. We use it to create the false gods of leisure, comfort, security, experiences, & success. And I'm telling you that unless you decide NOW and every day after today to remember what you have is from God and FOR God you will drift into using that wealth to fund recreational idolatry. As a matter of fact, they get to a remote mountain & can't even SPEND it...but their hearts are so prone to worship false Gods that they transform the silver & gold into a God. And you will be tempted to transform your wealth into something that serves you too.

Are you investing God's wealth that he PROVIDED for you - for his glory or for yours? Wealth isn't bad! God



provides it! Loves when you enjoy his blessings. But it's for HIS glory, not yours.

Ok let's move to our final scene in Exodus 12 where we see God the merciful.

**41** At the end of 430 years, on that same day, all the Lord's military divisions went out from the land of Egypt. **42** It was a night of vigil in honor of the Lord, because he would bring them out of the land of Egypt. This same night is in honor of the Lord, a night vigil for all the Israelites throughout their generations.

The night vigil is the night of the Passover. This is another time where God is reinforcing how important this meal is. In fact, he is about to talk more about who should be there and how they should eat it.

**43** The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner may eat it. **44** But any slave a man has purchased may eat it, after you have circumcised him. **45** A temporary resident or hired worker may not eat the Passover. **46** It is to be eaten in one house. You may not take any of the meat outside the house, and you may not break any of its bones.

Quick connection to Jesus. When he was crucified, not a single bone of his was broken. The soldiers, in order to bring death swiftly, would break the legs of the one crucified so they would die quicker. But by the time they got to Jesus he was already dead. So, they didn't break his legs. Thereby fulfilling the role of Passover lamb even down to the manner in which he died. John 19.33-36. The more you read the bible the more you see this is all one book. All pointing to Jesus.

**47** The whole community of Israel must celebrate<sup>it</sup> it. **48** If an alien resides among you and wants to observe the Lord's Passover, every male in his household must be circumcised, and then he may participate;<sup>if</sup> he will become like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat it. **49** The same law will apply to both the native and the alien who resides among you."

Ok now I think this is pretty cool. So, the identifying literal mark God gave his people way back was the mark of circumcision. And God says listen to this meal that is a celebration of my provision for MY FAMILY.... I'm going to make a way for outsiders to come to the table. For all peoples to come to the table. They gotta take the mark before they take the meal. And the mark is...let's put it gently...not something you take lightly.



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You don't take this because you are hungry. NO, you take this because you want what they have. You've seen their God provide and you've come to the realization that he is the one true God. And God says ok. **OUTSIDERS CAN COME TO THE TABLE!** They can come into the family! In fact, he wants them to. Take the mark and you can come to the table. Because verse 49 - once you take the mark there will be no distinction between native and alien. And it is here in this provision I see God's mercy. He has a people...but it is a people of all peoples and for all peoples. Anyone who desires can come. Yes, you must take the mark. And you can come.

Now what is that today? Circumcision in the New Testament is circumcision of the heart. It's the confession of faith. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

See the God of judgment and provision is a God of deep, deep love for all people. He is holy and is not casual about sin. He invites you to come as you are and promises you will leave totally transformed by his mercy. He's judged your sin and found you deserving of death. Yet pardons you because you have received the

forgiveness the PROVIDER has provided for you in Christ. He is judge, he is provider, he is merciful.

**50 Then all the Israelites did this; they did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 On that same day the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt according to their military divisions.**

Ready for a battle God would fight for them. Walking into a deliverance they did not fully understand but readily embraced. This is the joy of salvation, isn't it? I don't know what is going to happen. But God the judge has provided mercy for me and so I can trust him and take my next step.