

Stay At Home

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[0 : 0 0] well if we could this morning for a short while and with the Lord's help if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Exodus Exodus chapter 12 if we read again at verse 12 Exodus chapter 12 at verse 12 for I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt both man and beast and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments I am the Lord the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are and when I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt this day shall be for you a memorial day and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations as a statute forever you shall keep it as a feast and so on stay at home protect the NHS and save lives stay at home protect the NHS and save lives that's the message from our government our NHS and even our local council that's the message which has been clearly and repeatedly given to us during this period of lockdown stay at home protect the NHS and save lives the safest place to be during the coronavirus pandemic is in your own home and behind closed doors because as soon as you step out we're told that as we step out over the threshold of our home we're putting ourselves and others at risk therefore we are only to leave our homes to go to work if we're a key worker or to go shopping for essentials or for exercise once a day once a day or to help those who are vulnerable otherwise the message is very simply stay at home protect the NHS and save lives but as you know it's not easy to stay at home it's not easy when you can't see friends and family the way the the way you used to even as a minister it's not easy to stay at home when you're unable to go and see your congregation but out of love for our family our friends our neighbours and even our congregation the best thing we can do to protect the NHS and to save lives is to stay at home and you know in many ways that was the Lord's message to the Israelites at the time of the Passover stay at home stay at home because as we just read the Lord promised the Israelites that he was going to pass through the land of Egypt killing all the firstborn but if the Israelites if the Israelites stayed at home and covered their doorpost the doorpost and the lintel of their houses if they covered them with blood the Lord would see the blood and pass over the Israelites would be saved they would be saved by staying at home seeking the Lord and sheltering under the blood and you know this Wednesday this coming Wednesday Wednesday the 8th of April it marks the beginning of that seven-day Jewish festival of Passover and as you know it's a Jewish festival which also coincides with the Christian festival of Easter because well today is Sunday the 5th of April and it's often referred to in our calendars as Palm Sunday it's the day on which Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey and the crowds were there they were throwing palm branches and their cloaks on the ground and they were all singing Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord but as we know and as we've been

reminded over the past few weeks a lot can change from one week to the next because the crowds they were shouting Hosanna on Palm Sunday but they were all they were shut the same crowds were shouting crucify him by Good Friday and from one Sunday to the next from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday Jesus had been crucified dead and buried and then resurrected on the Lord's day but you know this morning I want us to think about the Jewish festival of Passover and consider three things about the Passover I want us to think about the purpose of the Passover the preparation of the Passover and the promise of the Passover so the purpose of the Passover the preparation of the Passover and the promise of the Passover so first of all the purpose of the Passover the purpose of the Passover if you read again at verse one the Lord said to Moses and

Aaron in the land of Egypt, this month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Now as a title to the book, to a book, the book of Exodus is, you could say, almost self-explanatory. Because as you know, the word Exodus, it refers to a mass departure of people. And it's the festival of Passover which celebrates the Exodus. Because the Exodus, this mass departure of Israelites from the land of Egypt, it finally took place after the Passover. Because the Passover was actually what finally broke Pharaoh's hardened heart and stopped him holding on to what didn't belong to him. Because as you know, the Israelites, the Israelites were God's covenant people. They were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And they were known as the children of Israel because of Jacob. You remember that Jacob was renamed Israel, a name which means God fights. And that's, you know, that's what the opening chapters in the book of Exodus are all about. It's all about God fighting for his covenant people, Israel. God has heard the cries of his people as they're suffering under the bondage and slavery and even the tyranny of the Egyptian Pharaoh. And in the opening chapters, we see God fighting for his people. And he fights for his people by sending Moses. He sends Moses, the man of God, to command Pharaoh to let his covenant people go. And that's what the repeated emphasis is in these chapters. And leading up to this chapter, where Moses, the Lord's prophet, he continually goes to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and he goes to proclaim the single but solemn message, thus says the Lord, let my people go that they may serve me.

But as you know, Pharaoh, he didn't listen. And he wouldn't let the Israelites go. Pharaoh. And so plagues were sent upon the land of Egypt to remind Pharaoh that God is not to be mocked. And with every plague, the Lord was fighting for his people. For the Lord, we read the plagues, there were 10 plagues. The Lord turned the water of the river Nile, he turned it into blood, and all the fish died. Then the Lord sent frogs, he sent gnats, he sent flies, he afflicted the livestock of the Egyptians. The Lord then brought upon them pestilence of boils.

[7 : 51] There was thunder and hail, which killed both plants and people. Then there was locusts, which devoured the land. Then there was a thick darkness that lasted for three days. And with each plague, we see that the Lord was fighting for his people. He was fighting for his people and reminding Pharaoh that the Israelites were his people. And you know, my friend, there's no greater comfort than to know that the Lord fights for his people. The Lord says about his people, they are my people. They are my people. And you know, our catechism, our catechism teaches us that Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies. In other words, the catechism teaches us that Jesus fights for his people. And he fights for his people by drawing us to himself, by defending us with his life, and defeating all our enemies. King Jesus fights for his people. He fights against sin, Satan, and death, which are the enemies of our soul. But more than that, he fights for our attention.

Do you know, my friend, Jesus fights for our attention among all the voices of this world. Jesus fights for our love. He fights for our dedication. He fights for our devotion.

The Lord fights for his people. And you know, that's what we see in this chapter. The Lord was fighting for the people of Israel. But it was the Passover, this final plague, you could say, it was the Passover that the Lord, with the Passover, that the Lord delivered, you could say, the knockout punch to Pharaoh. Because the Passover and the death of all the firstborn in Egypt, that's what finally broke Pharaoh's hardened heart, allowing the Israelites to be freed from slavery and bondage in Egypt. But you know, we have to ask, why the firstborn? Why did the Lord kill all the firstborn in Egypt? Of course, in the ancient world, the firstborn were heirs of their father's inheritance. They were, you could say, they had special status above all the other siblings in the family. But the reason the Lord was going to kill all the firstborn in Egypt was because the

Lord said to Moses back in Exodus 4, he said to him, this is what you shall say to Pharaoh. Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son. And I say to you, let my son go, that he may serve me.

If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son. The Lord regarded the people of Israel as his firstborn son. And the Lord killed all the firstborn in Egypt because Pharaoh refused to let his firstborn son go. And you know, what the Lord was repeatedly emphasising to his people is that he's not only their king who fights for them, but he's also their father. He's their father who loves, cares and adopts them as his own children. He says, Israel is my firstborn son.

[11 : 37] And you know, even in that, there's the hope of the gospel. That we as sinners, we are able to be known as the children of God. Because it's Jesus who fights for us. And it's our father in heaven who loves us, cares for us and even adopts us to be his children. You know, that's what the apostle John reminds us. He says to us, behold, what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. And so the purpose of the Passover, the purpose of the Passover was both a defence and a demonstration. The Lord was defending his people by fighting for them.

And he was demonstrating his love for them as their father. But secondly, we see the preparation of the Passover. So the purpose of the Passover and then the preparation of the Passover. The preparation of the Passover. We'll read from verse two. This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, every man shall take a lamb according to their father's houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbour shall take according to the number of persons, according to what each can eat, you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. The preparation of the Passover, and indeed the institution of the Passover, it was going to be a significant moment in the history of the

Israelites. Because the death of the firstborn in Egypt, and the Exodus, this mass departure of Israelites out of slavery and bondage, it was going to be remembered and celebrated by the Jews for generations to come. In fact, the Passover was going to be such a momentous occasion that the Lord describes it in verse two as the beginning of months. He says, this month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Now what's interesting about the Jews is that they had not one but two calendars which they followed. They had a civil calendar and they also had a religious calendar. But in many ways this wasn't unique because, well, we have many calendars which we follow. We have our calendar year which begins on the first of January, but we also have the fiscal or the financial year which begins this month in April. We also have an academic year which begins around

August, September time. And so having many calendars is quite a common thing. But you know, for the Jews they had a civil calendar which began around September, October time, and it was marked by the Day of Atonement.

And they also had a religious calendar which began around March, April time, around this time of year. And it was marked with the festival of Passover by focusing upon the Lamb. Because the Passover Lamb was the focus of the festival. The Passover Lamb was the focus of the festival. And the preparation of the Passover, it began by choosing a suitable and a specific Lamb. The Lamb, we're told, it had to be a male without blemish, and a year old. And the Israelites, they were to choose their suitable and specific Lamb on a specific day. They were to choose it on the 10th day of the month. And then on the 14th day of the month, the day of preparation, the whole assembly of the people of Israel, all the Israelites, they were to kill their Passover lambs at twilight. Now twilight literally means between the evenings. So after sunset, after sunset, on the 14th day of the month, every Israelite home was to kill their Passover lamb.

[16 : 12] Now just to give you a bit of perspective, there were over 2 million Israelites in Egypt. And there were about 600,000 Israelite homes. Which means that there would have been about 600,000 Passover lambs slaughtered on the evening of the 14th day of the month. But you know, when the Passover lamb was to be killed, the head of the home, presumably the father or even the grandfather, he would slit the throat of the lamb and catch its blood in a little metal basin. And as the life of the Passover lamb, as the life of the lamb drained from the animal, it was to be a clear and vivid reminder that the Passover lamb was providing substitution and also safety for that home. And then the blood of the Passover lamb, as you know, the head of the home, he would take the blood of the Passover lamb and then take a bit of, a bunch of hyssop. Hyssop was this small plant with lots of flowers on it that would act like a sponge.

And they would dip the hyssop plant inside this blood of the Passover lamb. And as you know, they would take the Passover, the blood of the Passover lamb and they would wipe it across the lintel and down the two doorposts of the house. And this happened on every door of every Israelite home, which meant that the doors of 600,000 Israelite homes were left dripping with the blood of a Passover lamb.

And once the blood of the Passover lamb had been applied to the door of their home, each family was then to go inside. They were to go inside, close the door and stay at home.

In fact, it was at home that the Israelites were to prepare their last supper. Because the meal that we read about, the meal of roasted lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs, it would be their last supper in Egypt before the exodus the following day. But once the blood of the Passover lamb had been applied to the lintel and the doorposts of their house, the Israelites were told they were to stay at home. The Israelites were to stay at home. And the Lord explains why in verse 12. They were to stay at home, verse 12, for I will pass through the land of Egypt that night. And I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And on all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of

Egypt. At midnight, the Lord was going to pass through the land of Egypt and strike down the firstborn in the land. All, and it was all because Pharaoh refused to let Israel, the Lord's firstborn son, Pharaoh refused to let them go. And you know, it was such a solemn occasion because as the Lord silently passed through the land of Egypt, you could see that the Israelites, they all stayed at home.

[19 : 45] They were all seeking the Lord. They were all sheltering under the blood of the Passover lamb. But as we're told later in verse 30, the silence of midnight was broken. And it was broken with the cry, a great cry in Egypt. We're told that there was not a house of the Egyptians where someone was not dead. There was life in the homes of the Israelites who were sheltering. They were all sheltering under the blood of the Passover lamb. But there was death in the homes of the Egyptians.

The firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the dungeon were all dead. No one was except. Death was the great leveler in the nation of Israel. And you know, as the Lord moved in judgment upon the nation, whether you were a prince or a pauper, death came knocking upon the homes and families and communities of that nation. And you know, my friend, well, we're familiar with that knock, aren't we? We're familiar with death knocking on our doors and breaking into our homes and families and even into our communities. We're familiar. We're familiar with that knock, knock of death, where it steals from us those whom we love and those whom we cherish. We're familiar with that knock, aren't we? But you know, as this coronavirus slowly and silently moves through the countries of our United Kingdom and even in this past week to our shores, you know, we can see that the Lord is moving. The Lord is moving in judgment upon our nation. He's reminding us that he's still there.

Although we have, for far too long, we've been like Pharaoh, we've hardened our heart against the Lord, we've turned our back upon him, we've rejected his word, we've ridiculed his cause, we've removed his day, we've refused his son. And as a nation, the Lord is bringing us to our knees. He's shutting us down and reminding us that he's still there and he is not to be mocked. He's not to be mocked. But you know, as we hear of the coronavirus spreading and the death toll rising higher and higher day by day, I don't know about you. But you know, I worry that maybe it'll soon be knocking on the doors of our homes and our families. You know, that's why our government are pleading with us to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. But you know, my friend, the problem is not dying of a virus.

As you know, the problem is dying without Jesus. The problem is not dying of a virus. The problem is dying without Jesus. And that's always been the problem. The problem is our sin. The problem is dying without Jesus as our saviour. Of course, our scientists, they all predict that a good result of this coronavirus pandemic will be that 20,000 people in the United Kingdom will die. Which, when you work it out, it works out as about 0.3%, 0.03% of the population.

But you know, our Bible affirms to us that the world pandemic, which causes a 100% death rate, is sin. The wages of sin is death. The wages of sin causes death to come knocking at our door.

[23 : 37] And it doesn't matter who we are, whether a prince or a pauper, the wages of sin is death. But you know, the gospel reminds us the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And you know, my unconverted friend, the message which your Bible is giving to you today, it's not stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. The message your Bible is giving to you this morning is stay at home, seek the Lord and shelter under his blood. Stay at home, seek the Lord and shelter under the blood.

Because the only way to have safety from the power of sin and death is by seeking the Lord with all your heart. And you know, that's what David was praying in Psalm 51. You know, Psalm 51, it's my favourite Psalm, where David is asking the Lord for forgiveness. He's asking the Lord for cleansing. And in many ways, you could say that in Psalm 51, David stayed at home. David sought the Lord and David prayed that he would be sheltered under the blood of the Passover lamb. Because David says in Psalm 51, do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so, yea, wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow. David sheltered in the promise of the Passover. And my friend, that's what you need to do too. You need to shelter in the promise of the Passover. And that's actually what

I want us to consider lastly. The promise of the Passover. We've looked at the purpose of the Passover, the preparation of the Passover. But lastly, the promise of the Passover. The promise of the Passover.

We read in verse 14, this day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. As a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

You know, when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him one day, he made that memorable statement, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Of course, John the Baptist knew that Jesus, he was the promise of the Passover. And although he never saw the promise of the Passover being fulfilled, John the Baptist knew that one day Jesus would be the Passover lamb and he would be the focus of the festival. And you know, the gospel reminds us, the gospels remind us that it was on the day of preparation, the day on which the Passover lamb was killed, and the day on which the Israelites ate their last supper before the Exodus. It was on the day of preparation that Jesus and his disciples ate the last supper in the upper room. It was on the day of preparation that Jesus, he instituted the Lord's supper by informing his disciples that he is the promise of the Passover. It was on the day of preparation that Jesus, we're told, took unleavened bread and broke it, saying, this is my body which is broken for you. My friend, it was on the day of preparation that Jesus took the cup of the Messiah and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you. It was on the day of preparation that Jesus was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, rejected by the Jews, sentenced by Pilate and crucified by the Romans. My friend, it was the day of preparation between the two evenings that the

[27 : 38] Lamb of God, he hung upon the crossbeams of Calvary, dripping in Passover blood. And it was on the day of preparation that as God the Father passed through the city of Jerusalem in judgment, God the Son was fighting for his people and he was heard crying from the cross, Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And with that cry, we see that the Father passed over sinners and he poured out his wrath against sin upon his only begotten Son who was the promise of the Passover. My friend, Jesus, Jesus is the promise of the Passover. And it was on the day of preparation that the Lamb of God was providing safety and substitution for every home and every family and every sinner who comes to shelter under the blood of the Lamb. And you know, the message which your Bible is giving to you today is stay at home, shelter under the blood and seek the Lord. Stay at home, shelter under the blood and seek the Lord. In fact, the whole of the Bible from Genesis all the way through to Revelation, it presents that one message. Stay at home, seek the Lord, shelter under the blood. You know, when you go back right to the beginning, right to the beginning of the Bible, to the book of Genesis, Genesis 3, the moment after the fall, we hear that the Lord sacrificed his firstborn creation to clothe Adam and Eve. You go to

Genesis 4 where there's Cain and Abel. The Lord regarded the sacrifice of Abel because he offered up his firstborn lamb. When Abraham offered up his firstborn son, Isaac asked his father that poignant question, where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham, he prophetically responded by saying, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. Moses, he saw it. He saw the Lamb of God through the Passover in Egypt. Isaiah, he also spoke about the lamb when he said that he would be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers, he would be silent. Isaiah prophesied that this same lamb would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace would be upon him, and with his stripes we would be healed. And that healing was affirmed by the prophet Zechariah towards the end of the Old Testament. He said that there will be a fountain that will be opened for sin and uncleanness. And my friend, when we come into the Gospels, the good news of the Gospel tells us that there is a fountain. There's a fountain filled with blood drawn from

Emmanuel's veins and sinners. And you go into the New Testament letters. Paul affirmed this.

In all his letters, he said that Christ is our Passover lamb, that we're able to be brought near and experience peace through the blood of his cross. All because, it's all because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. Peter also encouraged us with this, that we are redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

That blood like a lamb, without blemish and without spot, he says. But you know, my friend, you come right to the end, to the book of Revelation, and it's John.

[31 : 26] John tells us that in his Revelation, he saw a lamb. A lamb standing as though it had been slain. And he says there in his Revelation that he saw a multitude that no man could number.

And they're all standing before the throne and before the lamb. And they're all clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. And they're all singing, worthy is the lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.

And then you hear the question. The question comes from heaven. Who are these clothed in white robes? And where have they come from?

And the answer is given. These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation. For they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

And we're told that they are before the throne of God. And they serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne, he will shelter them with his presence.

[32 : 37] They shall hunger no more. Neither shall they thirst any more. Nor the sun strike them with any scorching heat. For the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd.

And he will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Oh my friend, can't you see that Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb?

Can't you see that Jesus Christ is this great Passover lamb? And the message which the Bible, your Bible is giving to you today is stay at home.

Seek the Lord. And shelter under his blood. And you know my unconverted friend. As you stay at home and protect the NHS and save lives. My longing is.

That as you stay at home. You will use this opportunity. This opportunity of not going to work. Having more time to think.

[33 : 39] That you would use this opportunity to stay at home. To seek the Lord with all your heart. And to shelter under the blood of Jesus. Stay at home.

Seek the Lord. Shelter under the blood of Jesus. Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. And let us pray. O Lord our gracious God.

We give thanks to thee that Jesus is our Passover lamb. And that he was even promised there in the Garden of Eden. That when Adam sinned. And that when the wages of sin brought death.

That the gift of God was prophesied even there. That the only begotten son would be given. As a lamb for a sacrifice. And we thank thee Lord that that thread is able to be seen.

All the way through scripture. And it reaches its peak and its climax. And its fulfilment in the cross of Jesus Christ. Help us then even today.

[34 : 41] Or to come to this Passover lamb. That as we stay at home. That we might all seek the Lord. And shelter under his blood. To know Lord that this blood is able to cleanse us from all our sin.

And that the promise is that if we confess our sin. The Lord one who is faithful and just. To forgive us our sin. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. O Lord bless us then we pray.

Bless thy truth to our hearts. And Lord help us to be found sheltering under the blood. For time and for eternity. Go before us then we pray. Lead us and guide us by thy spirit.

For we ask it in Jesus name. And for his sake. Amen.