

Today's Sermon

Exodus and Christmas (Exodus 10:21-29)

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC, Dec. 17, 2022

Some of you in this room were alive this month 81 years ago

- you remember that Christmas season like no other.
- **December 7, 1941, is a day that lives in infamy**
 - o ever since **Japan attacked Pearl Harbor** early that Sunday morning.

Firepower from above had rained down, decimating the U.S. armed forces and our Pacific Fleet

- The world saw the dark clouds and water darkened with the blood of thousands of sons.
- No peace on earth that Christmas, it was **WW II.**

Today, Congo is in a Civil War and the Russian-Ukrainian war affects families here

The kids here have been practicing for the Christmas choir next week.

- In Hawaii in 1941, Toni had been practicing for the next week's Christmas pageant
- singers would carry candles (much like we will this Friday night here).
- But that was all cancelled that year and kids, imagine this:
 - o Toni had to carry around a gas mask with her everywhere she went for 4 years.
- If you had been in Hawaii during those bombings, you'd never forget,
 - o and to this day explosion sounds haunt her.
 - o Toni is still alive and lives in the Sacramento area (recent SacBee article¹).

Anyone in the world alive in that time will never forget what they saw and heard

- Debbie Nudo's dad was a Pearl Harbor survivor who attended GCBC a while.
 - o Never forget that great generation. Grandparents, keep telling us.

In WW II there were many attacks on Japan's land from the sky.

- The U.S. firebombed the cities of the nation, including Tokyo
 - o where 100,000 died in a single night in 1945.
 - o But the hard-hearted emperor kept stubbornly refusing surrender.

Things would get darker for the nation before the light of peace could shine

Months after Germany surrendered, the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on 2 cities of Japan

- in a matter of days, that great empire admitted defeat.
- Hirohito wrote if they kept fighting it would mean "an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the nation ... how are we to save the millions of our subjects, or to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our imperial ancestors?"²

The Bible tells us there's only way of atonement for nations, and it has saved millions

Let's turn to Exodus and remember Egypt wanted to wipe out a future army of Israel in ch 1.

- Pharaoh feared the Jews would join enemies in war to fight Egypt,
- so he ordered a pre-emptive strike on the sons to wipe out a future army.
- God was not a sleeping giant. He was awake and He declared war in response.
- The blood of the Nile had been darkened with blood of the sons of Israel
 - o God turned it to blood in judgment.

In **Ex 7-10** are God's attacks on Egypt's water, land, and sky, and the spirits of their gods.

- There's 2 more bombs God will drop
 - o but it will be a matter of days before Egypt admits loss.

Last time in ch 9 we saw God go after the very heart of the nation

- to rain down fire, decimate Egypt's land
- and show they have no atonement or option but surrender

Others in the world alive in that time saw and heard and could never forget

But just like Toni and some of you grew up practicing drills with bomb shelters

- God offered shelter even as He scorched the earth in Egypt (9:19),
- the shelter saved from a deadly firestorm.
- In Ex 8-9 God's people in Goshen were protected from the pestilences
 - o and the terrifying flying creatures or the destruction of their fields and death.

Ps 91 could have been sung in these times: *He who dwells in the **shelter** of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty...he will save you from the ...deadly **pestilence**... You will not fear **the terror of night**...nor **the plague that destroys at midday**. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked...[God says] I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.³*

Today we'll see the Almighty protect Israel and punish the wicked with a 'terror of night' plague

Look at **Ex ch 10**. This is plague #9, let's pick up in **10:21**: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt."²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.*

*²³ They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. ²⁴ Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind."²⁵ But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. ²⁶ Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there."²⁷ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. ²⁸ Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die."²⁹ Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again." **11:1** The LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.*

We'll look at ch 11 in another message, but after darkness the final bomb is

- death of thousands of the sons of Egypt (maybe 100k+?).
- And already there's mutiny forming against the dictator, (ch 10, v. 7, like Russia and China recently?).

In **ch 8** Pharaoh tried to temporarily conditionally surrender, saving face and some control,

- 'I will let you go...but sacrifice in the land of Egypt... don't go far' (8:25, 28).
- In ch 10, v. 11 he'll say the men can go, just not kids,
- then later in v. 24 the kids can go, just not animals for sacrifice.

- But in ch 11, v. 5, God says Egypt's kids will die and animals, every firstborn
- and v. 8 says Pharaoh's officials will bow, unconditional surrender

This is part of the bigger story of the Bible where on judgment day every knee will bow to Christ

Outline:

- 1. Feel the darkness of the 1st Exodus**
- 2. See the light of the 2nd Exodus**
- 3. Share the message this Christmas**

1. Feel the darkness of the 1st Exodus

The end of v. 21 says this was a darkness you could feel.

- You ever feel that kind of darkness, it forces you to feel around or grope?
 - This was even worse, they're not only feeling it, it's forcing them to stay down.
- ²³ *They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days...*
- This is far worse than a stay-at-home order, the plagues have destroyed all order
 - Now they're forced to stay down at home, you can't even get up in your place

Try to feel the force of this, on your back and all is black in all the land of Egypt for 72 hours.

- It says Israel had light in their dwellings
 - sounds like Egypt couldn't even light candles in theirs.
- Egypt was the land of the sun and sun worship, how would they feel now?
 - Israel needed to feel how dark idols are.

In Ezekiel 20 God says He was (His words) '*making myself known to them, in the land of Egypt; I swore to them...that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into...I said to them, 'Cast away...and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.'* But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me...nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. "Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. So I led them out of the land of Egypt..."⁴

It's for the glory of His name that He'll deliver Israel who's still worshipping Egypt's idol gods.

- Earlier in Ex 10 the locusts show Anubis, guardian of the fields, can't guard against this
- Other gods of crops aren't to be worshipped either, only God controls crops and locusts
- The LORD is the true God of thunder,
- He's bringing down the hammer and hail on Egypt's supposed sky goddess or storm god.
- Fire and lightning kill man and beast and break every tree.

Today there's gods of materialism or Mormonism (moralism can't save either)

- idols from Catholicism to cultural Marxism,
- behaviorism or Buddhism,
- Hinduism or humanism,
- racist nationalism or regular narcissism.

In **Ex 10:21** God takes out the sun on Egypt to take out their sun-god Ra.

- Where is Horus, their god of sunrise? Or Atum, god of sunset?
- No sun was a diss on their god of the sun-disc, Aten.
- Even at night God allows no moonlight from the god Khonshu (Moon Knight).

Ryken ‘the supreme deity in their national pantheon was Amon-Re...“he who has no opponent among the gods.” The Egyptians believed that this solar deity was their creator... Egyptians identified Pharaoh as the son of Amon-Re...the sun god on earth...In school, children were instructed to “Worship [Pharaoh], living forever...with his majesty in your hearts.... He is Re, by whose beams one sees...” lord of their hearts. Sometimes they even prayed to him, saying, “Attend to me...O solar disk of mankind that dispels darkness from Egypt.” [he can’t in Ex 10!]

... Americans have many gods, but our supreme deity [isn’t the sun, it] seems to be Self. We honor, admire, and love ourselves more than anyone or anything...we depend on our own abilities and admire our own accomplishments. We devote nearly all our attention to making our own plans, meeting our own needs, serving our own interests, and satisfying our own pleasures. We even complain about our own problems. It’s all about us. We idolize ourselves.’⁵

We need turn from the darkness of self

- and whatever eclipses the Lord of light in our hearts.
- Here God schedules a blackout to show He alone has the power.
- The gods of sun and self and others are shown to be powerless
- God blots out light and mocks idols outright.
- God will say later that idols have eyes but they can’t see, feet but they can’t move.
 - o In fact, 10:23 says the Egyptians couldn’t see or even move from where they were,
 - o it was paralyzing pitch darkness.
 - o Egypt is immobilized and their gods are impotent.

Why 3 days? Pharaoh didn’t let Israel go 3 days into the wilderness to worship God,

- now Egypt can’t worship their gods or do anything.

They can’t see their hand or even stand, it’s a darkness they feel and forces them to be still

In v. 24 Pharaoh says he’ll let Israel go but without their animals to worship by sacrifice.

- Like singing ‘I surrender some.’ But God’s call is surrender all.
- Some will let you bring them to the church but there’s no sacrifice of their life.
- Their little ones go to church one day a week for 1.5 hours
- but there’s little the family does for or with people of church that day or the other 6 days.
- Some go sometimes but give zero percent of their income
 - o and give no thought to serving others.

Do you try to keep what’s valuable behind, maybe not livestock but your lifestyle?

- Your time, talent, treasure?
- If Jesus isn’t Lord of all, He’s not your Lord at all, and your heart is in darkness

You can’t serve 2 masters, it’s all or nothing, it’s idols or Immanuel, self or the Savior

Look at v. 26, Moses now instructs the king ‘*Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve...*’ (worship).

- There's no concession or compromise with the world,
- no holding back, true worship gives God our all.
- He tells Pharaoh you don't get 1 hoof!

Remember earlier Moses feared he couldn't speak to Pharaoh?

- He's not slow of speech now, is he?
- Pharaoh: 'don't see my face again,' Moses replies 'yep, I won't see your face again!'

That's a mic drop moment: you're right, I'll never see you again (we're out!)

Pharaoh's heart is still hardened and darkened at the end of this chapter, but we can't end there. The NT applies it to us, Eph 4:17 don't walk like those '*darkened in their understanding...due to their hardness of heart.*' Jesus calls us to serve Him, holding nothing back, no turning back.

If you don't love the Lord, you're in darkness now and eternal outer darkness is coming
That takes us to our 2nd point:

2. see the light of the 2nd Exodus (this connects to Christmas)

Turn to Lk 1. 15 centuries before Christ's birth, this pointed to the gospel this dark world needs.

- Pharaoh had a chip on his shoulder and thought his government was wonderful,
- he saw himself as the father of peace and order,
- he was seen as the source of light and mighty god over Egypt.
- Pharaoh's counsel was supposedly everlasting.
 - o But now '*darkness over the land of Egypt,*'
 - o Egypt can barely walk around in that deep darkness,
 - o and where Israel dwelt, much light shines!

Listen to Isaiah's prophecy: '*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*'¹⁶ That's Isa 9 and that's about the birth of Christ, who actually is all Pharaoh claimed and more. Isaiah said Messiah will '*release from darkness...the prisoners...*'¹⁷

Long lay the world in sin and darkness pining, till He appeared...

400+ suffering silent years from end of Genesis to Exodus,

- till an angel of the Lord speaks to Moses, and he his brother Aaron tell Israel.
- In Lk 1 it's been another 400+ silent years since the end of the OT,
- Israel is suffering under Roman oppression, but now God begins to speak again.

Again it's through the family tree of Aaron and Moses, the priestly line of Levi

Lk 1:5 *In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife **from the daughters of Aaron**, and her name was Elizabeth... ¹¹ And there appeared to him **an angel of the Lord** standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and **fear fell upon him.**[like Moses in Ex 3] ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John...*

The original mother of Aaron also bore a son special son who would live in the wilderness for over 30 years. The voice calling to him in the wilderness said at the burning bush, *'The **LORD God of your fathers...surely visited you...I have come down to deliver [Israel] out of the hand of the Egyptians... you shall serve God...**'*⁸ God had mercy on them and covenant grace and He promised to Moses in Ex 6 *'I swore to Abraham...I have remembered my covenant... and I will redeem you...to be my people...'*⁹

Zechariah, a priest from the same tribe as Moses, knew well the Exodus story. Look at Lk 1:67:

*And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,*⁶⁸ **"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people... [this is prophecy, God is doing this again, look at v. 72] to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,**⁷³ **the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us**⁷⁴ **that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him...'**

Almost every phrase there is straight out of Exodus, but it's applied to the Christmas story

That's why God was delivering His people

- from the hand of enemies to Egypt, to serve Him.
- Zechariah applied that to enemies beyond Egypt, **v. 77** is salvation, forgiveness from sins.

This isn't just a past tense Exodus, there's a future prophecy and Exodus with John and Jesus.

The end of **v. 78** is about the coming visit of Messiah, or Christ, using Exodus language. **v. 79:**

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

That starts in ch 2 with shepherds sitting in darkness who see light and hear of peace on earth

In Ex 10 Egypt sat in darkness and in Ex 11 they were in the shadow of death of the firstborns,

- but Zechariah uses that language for the coming light of Christ
 - o to guide us as Prince of Peace.
- Christmas is when God incarnate *'became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.'*

That's **Jn 1:14**, it says right before that *'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [same son of Zechariah]. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.'*

- He's the Christmas light

It's fitting that there's lights on trees and homes this time of year to light up the darkness

Matthew's gospel says Jesus would come out of Galilee, *'so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of...Galilee of the Gentiles— the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."* (**4:15-16**).

It all started that silent night 'with the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus Lord at Thy birth'

Lk 2:8 *And in the same **region** there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by **night**. [Christ was born in a time of darkness, literally and spiritually] ⁹ And an **angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone** around them ... [and in v. 13 an even greater light of heavenly hosts]*

- In v. 11-12 they tell them in Bethlehem the Savior is a newborn baby wrapped in cloths,
 - o lying in a manger.
- Makes me think of the OT deliverer of Israel who God used to deliver from Egypt.
- Moses was also found as a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in an unusual wooden box.
- And in both cases there's a young girl named Mary involved
 - o (Miriam is the Hebrew spelling of Mary).

Both times a baby was rescued who would be the rescuer of God's people

Notice **Lk 2:7** calls Jesus Mary's '*firstborn son,*' that's another connection to the Exodus story.

- In Egypt the firstborn sons had to die to let God's people go,
- Jesus had to die to free His people.
- In both cases God's people were living in oppression (Egypt and Rome).
- In both cases the child who would deliver was adopted
 - o (Pharaoh's daughter and Joseph by marriage is adoptive father).

In both cases an evil king was killing baby boys (Pharaoh in Ex 1, Herod in Mt 2), dark times.

**But in that little town's dark streets shines the everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years were met in Christ that night**

In Exodus God gave His revelation to Israel and His glory cloud lit up and led them. In Lk 2:32 Simeon says Jesus is '**a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.**' ³³ *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.* ³⁴ *And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and **a sword will pierce through your own soul also**), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

That's a prophecy of the cross, Jesus pierced through His side, His mom though her soul, too!

'Nails spear, shall pierce Him through, the cross be born for me for you...what child is this?'
This is how 'The King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.' Do you?

Which takes us to the closing application:

3. Share the message this Christmas

Ex 9 says the purpose of the whole Exodus is to proclaim the name of the Lord in all the earth.

- We started with Egypt having '*darkness over all the land,*'
- it's the same phrase when Jesus was on the cross, darkness over all the land for 3 hours.
- The sun was blotted out again and this time sin was being blotted out
 - o This time Jesus took God's judgment on Himself.
 - o The firstborn of Mary dies as the Passover lamb w

- whose blood takes away the sin of the world for all who believe

Share the message: Bring your sin into the light, don't hide or minimize it, confess it to Christ

In **Ex 10**, no one rose from where their place for 3 days

- in the gospel Jesus didn't rise for 3 days from His place of death.
- But then He conquered sin's darkness as He rose to bring us out.
- Eph 5:8 'at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...'

Col 1:13 *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption...forgiveness of sins.* What's the application? v. 12 says give thanks

Rom 1:21 says if sinners don't give thanks to honor God, their foolish hearts are darkened. Practical application: if you're complaining instead of thanking God, you go to a dark place.

- Your heart and home is a dark place if you're complaining and not thanking God.
- It's paralyzing and spiritually immobilizing if praise doesn't rise up.
- **Phil 2:14** says do everything without complaining or grumbling so you can '*shine as lights in the world*' (v. 16).
- **1 Pet 2:9** says you're '*a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*'
- So thank Him, proclaim Him, His excellencies to a dark world.
- Jesus said '*you are the light of the world.*'
- Let your light shine so others will see it and glorify God.

¹ <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article269686996.html#storylink=cpy>

² "Imperial Rescript," August 14, 1945. Various English translations at

https://archive.ph/20130915082323/http://members.jcom.home.ne.jp/yosha/yr/empires/Imperial_rescript_1945-08-14.html

³ NIV84.

⁴ Ezekiel 20:5-11, see also v. 14, 22, 44, etc.

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Crossway Books, 2005), 304–306.

⁶ Isaiah 9:2, 6.

⁷ Isaiah 61:1 NIV84.

⁸ Exodus 3:16, 8 NKJV.

⁹ Exodus 6:5-8 ESV.